

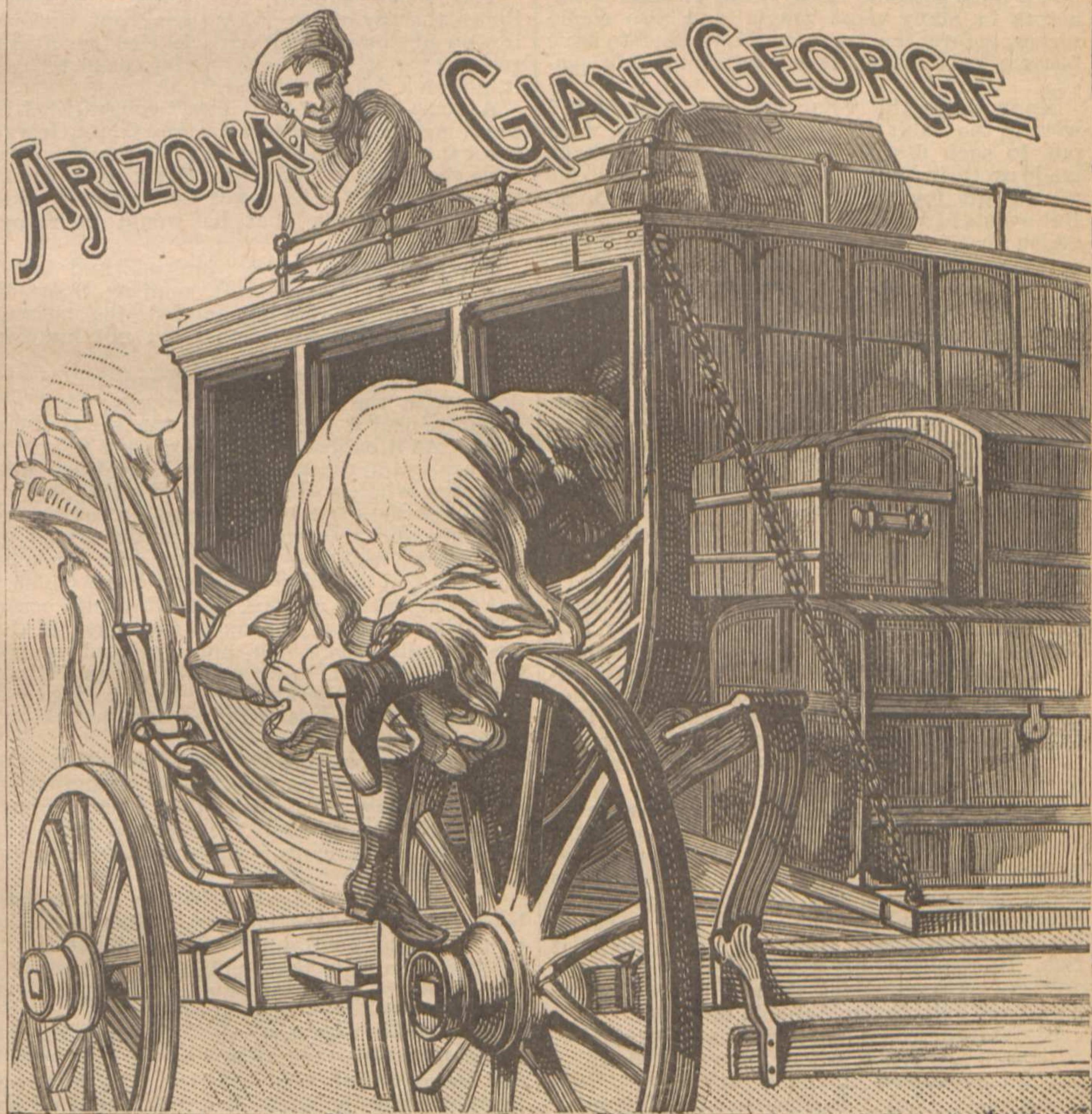


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No. 297. \$2.50
a Year.

Published Weekly by Beadle and Adams,
No. 98 WILLIAM ST., NEW YORK. Price,
Five Cents. Vol. XXIII.



MARM HOLBROOK CLIMBED UP THE HIND-WHEEL SPOKES, AND CRAWLED THROUGH THE
WINDOW OF THE COACH.

Arizona Giant George;

OR,

The Boyees of Sardine-Box City.

BY "BUCKSKIN SAM,"

(*Maj. Sam S. Hall*)

AUTHOR OF "GIANT GEORGE," "OLD ROCKY'S BOYEES," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

ORDER OUT OF CHAOS.

SARDINE-BOX CITY, situated in the Pinaleño Range of mountains in southeastern Arizona, had a most peculiar history, the citizens being actors in many most tragic and also comic scenes, before the burg could be said to have become established as a real *bona fide* success.

Many times the "Sardines," as the "citz" were in the habit of terming themselves, were put to such desperate straits that they about made up their minds to jump the Box, and git up an' git for more remunerative diggings. But events always occurred at the nick of time which served to change their minds, and influence them to keep their grip and hang on, hoping against hope; and eventually they were rewarded by the discovery of a rich lead in a most unexpected and peculiar manner. This was by the blowing up of the Slip-up Mine by the Tarantula of Taos.

This revealed one of the richest veins of ore that had ever gladdened the hearts of even the old "'49-ers," three of whom had located in Sardine-box City and lingered until they had spent their last dollar, when it became a matter of impossibility for them to get to any other point without hoofing it, and that through the most dangerous and sterile portions of the wild border.

Arizona Giant George having sworn to avenge his friend and pard, Sam Lawrence—who had been shot by El Capitan, the leader of a band of outlaws whose headquarters was in a cave up the range—entered Sardine-box City in partial disguise, with his inseparable companion Don Diablo, a most intelligent burro, or donkey, for the purpose of capturing a bandit spy who was in the town.

Sam Lawrence, who had been assassinated by El Capitan, but a short time previous to his death had written to his sister, Lena Lawrence, in St. Louis, detailing the circumstances of his being shot, and sending a chart, by means of which Lena could find the gold he had secreted, for the unfortunate young man had struck it rich. He requested his sister to come to Arizona, and get Arizona Giant George to guide and guard her until the gold should be found.

El Capitan, whose real name was Willoughby, with Sam Lawrence, whom he murdered, and a young man named Reynolds, had been schoolmates in St. Louis. Reynolds and Willoughby had been lovers of Lena, who engaged herself to the former, when Willoughby took an oath of revenge, which he never lost sight of.

He succeeded in separating Lena and his rival while the latter was in New York on business by intercepting and forging letters. He then effected the ruin of the girl's father by inducing him to invest his all in "wild cat" mining-stock; and then persuaded Sam Lawrence to accompany him to the West.

Willoughby shot and robbed Sam in Colorado but the latter recovered and went to Arizona, where he was very successful. Here, however, he was discovered and again shot by Willoughby, who had become the leader of a gang of bandits known as the "Panthers," Willoughby himself going by the cognomen of "El Capitan."

The bandit had expected to find the gold of his victim, but was disappointed.

But to return to Giant George.

The scout entered the town, "spotted" Sport, the spy of the "Panthers," put the outlaw on his burro, and with leveled revolvers, ran him through the town, having, as he termed it, got on a "jim-jamboree."

A large crowd of the "citz," congregated in the Nugget Hotel, rushed out, and Giant George "got the drop" on them; in fact, ran the burg for a short time. At length Black Ben, whom the scout knew to be one of the Panthers, rode up, not dreaming that he would be recognized.

Giant George at once "jumped" and killed the outlaw in a bowie-knife conflict; Sport, in the mean time, having incited the citizens against the scout, whom they did not know in his disguise.

The "citz," infuriated, dragged George down with the intention of hanging him to a mesquite near a big canyon at the south of the burg. As it happened, however, Lena Reynolds had arrived in the stage from Gold Gulch, and from the window of her room in the Nugget Hotel saw the scout being dragged away by the lynchers and recognized him as the friend of her brother who had been with him when he died and had buried him in Dead Man's Gulch.

Arming herself at once, Lena Reynolds rushed to the street, sprung upon the horse of the dead bandit, Black Ben, and galloped to the mesquite, as the mob were about to hang Giant George, thus saving his life by her daring and at the same time greatly impressing the "citz" by her beauty.

The giant scout then revealed himself to the "citz" and proved to them by an examination of Black Ben's saddle-bags, that he and Sport belonged to the Panthers. The spy at once was voted to the vacant position on the mesquite tree.

The same night Lena Lawrence, who had been dubbed by the citizens, "The Angel o' ther Penarlayno Range," disguised herself in the buckskin suit that had been her brother's and under the guidance of Giant George, went to visit the grave in Dead Man's Gulch.

After they had left, the Panthers dashed through the burg, killing several of the "citz" and losing one of their number, who was shot from his horse by Marm Holbrook, the landlady of the Nugget Hotel.

The arrival of Lena had, however, become known to El Capitan, her former lover, and

while she was weeping over her brother's grave and George was preparing their lunch at a distance, she was captured by two bandits, and carried to their cave.

The scout, finding that she had been abducted, hastened to the cave by a secret entrance, sending "Terrif," a cowboy, for the "citz," to attack the bandits in their stronghold from the main entrance.

Meanwhile, Reynolds, the alienated lover of Lena, having become aware of the perfidy of Willoughby and of the pilgrimage on which she had gone, had hastened to follow her, arriving in time to take an active part in her rescue; in fact, killing with his own hand the miscreant who had been the curse of himself and of the Lawrence family.

The powerful band of outlaws were entirely "cleaned-out" by the "citz" and the big Arizonian, with Terrif and Reynolds, entering the cavern by a secret opening, discovered in a branching cavity of the same, the gold of the murdered Sam Lawrence.

The "citz," on their return, ran wild. The whole burg got on a "jim-jamboree;" and to end it up, Lena and young Reynolds were married—the first wedding ever solemnized in Sardine-box City.

The fair bride promised to purchase mills and furnaces for the "Slip-up," and gave a handsome sum to each miner who had been engaged in her rescue; she and her husband then departing for St. Louis, the giant scout and Don Diablo accompanying them.

The burg remained in a stagnant state for three months, when Arizona Jack, from Wilmington, Del., arrived; and, about the same time, the stage from Gold Gulch brought Giant George with his burro on top.

Lena Reynolds was within the coach, but this was unknown to the "citz," she being under the influence of drugs, having lost her husband, sister and father, by yellow fever, within a few days of each other. Lena was but the ghost of her former self, and having no near relatives living, her one wish was to return to Sardine-box City.

The "citz" ran wild at the sight of Giant George, took the horses from the coach, and dragged it wildly toward the canyon. It was night, and these excited individuals knew nothing of the "Angel" being in the stage, Giant George intending to give them a surprise; but a surprise awaited him and them, for the Apaches entered the burg, and fired the shanties, all the "citz" being at the canyon with the coach, and Arizona Jack (Johnny Burke) being the only man in town.

The bravery of the latter, in this crisis, caused George to adopt him as a pard.

The "citz," seeing the blaze of the shanties, left Lena and Marm Holbrook in the coach, and Hank Holbrook with Don Diablo on top of it—the former being dead drunk—and rushed for the town. The Apaches came, surrounded the "hearse," and carried Hank, his wife, and Lena away; the latter, from her pale face and black robes, impressing the Indians with the conviction that she must be "Big Medicine."

Terrif, the cowboy, was captured, and tortured in a horrible manner at Dead Man's

Gulch; where Arizona Jack, at the discovery of the dying man by Giant George and the "citz," had a terrific fight with an Apache brave, whom he knifed, causing the "Sardines" to set him down as XXX on account of his skill and daring bravery. The Apaches were attacked and "cleaned out," their bodies and camp tricks burned, and the captives rescued. With them was a beautiful Castilian girl, Marietta Refugio, who had been captured at Santa Rita Ranch, near Tucson. Her mother, who, in an insane condition, had followed the Apaches, joined the citizens in the fight, and proved herself a terror, by slaying El Orso, the Apache chief.

This woman, crazed by the abduction of her daughter, and known as Juanita the Wild, had started alone on the trail, having in vain called upon the citizens of Tucson to go in search of Marietta.

The squaw of the Apaches arrived at the range, to join their braves, just previous to the fight, and escaped among the foot-hills with half-a-dozen wounded warriors. There they remained for some days, frantic for revenge, and capturing a bandit who was making a false trail for the purpose of deceiving Giant George in connection with a second abduction of Lena Reynolds.

This was instigated by Lena's nearest relative, a cousin, who had followed her from St. Louis, with the view of securing, through her murder, her fortune.

This wretch was slain by Giant George, as he was about to plunge a knife into the heart of Lena, as she lay senseless in a cavern, on the opposite side of the range from Dead Man's Gulch, where she had, a second time, been taken from her brother's grave, by some bandits quartered in the range.

The machinery, mills and furnace having arrived, and being unloaded in the basin by the jubilant "citz," under the superintendence of Tom Jones, the sheriff, the bandits, in the pay of the "Angel's" cousin, attacked the "citz," killing several, but they were eventually whipped, the leader and two others being hanged on the mesquite near the canyon.

During all this, the peculiar characters of the town had various amusing as well as tragic adventures. Marm Holbrook and her husband Hank came in for more than their share of these.

"The Tarantula of Taos," a self-termed border hero, had been hired to blow up the Slip-up Mine, and this was the means of disclosing to Tom Jones a rich lead below the one that had at first been discovered. This fact ran the whole burg again wild. The mills and furnaces had not been much injured by the explosion, or by the wild stampede of the oxen into the basin, which had caused the first stampede of the citizens, previous to the attack of the bandits.

This new excitement prevented the scouts from guarding Juanita and her daughter back to Tucson, to the husband and father, who, they knew, must be frantic with grief.

The Tarantula of Taos, after blowing up the mine, escaped; he having in an hour or two of amusing intercourse with Hank Holbrook, pre-

vious to his infamous act, "pumped" the landlord of the Nugget Hotel, getting the history of the town and its leading citizens, who are our principal characters in this series of mining-town stories.

The Tarantula proceeded down the range, intending to profit, if possible, by the knowledge he had gained from the drunken host of the Nugget.

Everything being now restored to something like order and tranquillity, Giant George and Arizona Jack determined to delay no longer in returning Donna Juanita Refugio, who, since the recovery of her daughter, had regained her reason, to her friends in Tucson.

We open our narrative upon the return of the maddened Apache squaws, now frantic and furious at the slaying of their braves by the "citz," and insanely eager for revenge. So, too, are the half-dozen warriors, who have nearly recovered from their wounds; the only survivors, except one, of El Orso's war-party.

A squaw has been dispatched to inform the head chief, Victorio, of the annihilation of El Orso and his braves, and a demand from the squaws for vengeance, they declaring that they will not return to their village until they have, in some manner, had revenge for the slaying of their lords and masters, whose cremated remains they, as yet, have not dared to visit, fearing an attack from the infuriated "citz."

However, they had determined to leave their hiding-place and hasten to the scene of the terrible fight between the whites and reds, and were starting upon that mission when the bandit galloped up the canyon, with a horse in the lead, upon the saddle of which was secured a stone of over a hundred pounds in weight. This had been arranged to lead Giant George to believe that Lena Reynolds was upon the beast, a captive, the bandit having started from Dead Man's Gulch at the same time that his comrades abducted Lena and hastened through the rocky pass, leaving no trail, as a matter of course—the trail of the single bandit, leading a second horse, deceiving the scout, as had been planned.

There was no chance for escape, for the doomed bandit had galloped at headlong speed around a curve in the canyon, and directly into the midst of the exultant Apache squaws, who at once made him a prisoner, and condemned him to torture—a doom which he would have suffered had not the bullet from the revolver of the giant scout pierced his brain.

Around and around in their hellish dance flew the hideous hags, first circling one way and then another. Blood-curdling yells came from their throats at every bound, while their knives cut the air in circles about their heads, keeping time to their devilish dance by swaying their arms as they yelled—a veritable vocal and optical pandemonium, in that isolated basin, the frame-work of which added to the unearthly scene.

CHAPTER II.

THE PARTING.

SARDINE-BOX CITY consisted of but one street, on each side of which was a line of slab shanties, some with flat and some with peaked

roofs. The Nugget Hotel was on the right as you passed south through the town, and was somewhat larger than any other building in the burg. Marm Holbrook was always boasting that she had the "only glass windies in ther burg," which was the fact, they serving to light up the two upper rooms beneath the peaked roof, within which one would be forced, in order to maintain a perpendicular position, to keep exactly under the ridge-pole. One of these two rooms was now occupied by Lena Reynolds.

This was designated by Marm Holbrook her "bestest room," and a sacred spot it was to her, Hank and Tom Jones, the sheriff, during the absence of the "Angel" in St. Louis. Hank and Tom frequently went up, with hats off, and stood in the doorway, when about three-fourths full of "bug juice," to gaze upon the apartment blessed forever, in their estimation, from having been occupied by the benefactress of the burg, now, in her absence, almost a "bu'sted burg."

Electric-like was the "flop over" when Giant George returned and announced that the machinery for the Slip-up Mine was on the road.

Hank Holbrook was a short, bullet-headed lump of humanity, with a genial red face and a flaming pug nose that revealed the sad fact that he was given to sampling the contents of his bar bottles quite frequently; in fact, acting as a thermometer. Tom Jones often asserted that he could tell how many drinks Hank had poured down by "gazin' et his smeller."

So given to drink, indeed, was Hank, that it was a frequent occurrence with him to have "snakes in the boots," besides quite a variety of reptiles and beasts, both known and unknown in natural history.

Marm Holbrook was the same build as her husband; her round, good-natured, motherly face being quite as red, but from a different cause—namely, from bending over the cooking-stove.

Tom Jones was a lank, Yankee-like individual; his face was sharp as a hatchet, and he had long hair, straight and stiff as bristles. He was quite fond of his quid of "nigger-head," and never was to take a back seat when the "crystals war slid onto ther bar."

Giant George, the scout, was a man of large frame and of powerful muscle and will, his heart being proportioned to his body, and he was loved and respected by every law-abiding man in Arizona. His pard, Arizona Jack, was a man of lightning-like motion, daring and reckless, and, although fresh on the frontier at the time of which we write, had, by his free and easy manner, self-sacrifice and bravery, won the respect of all.

Giant George was attired in buckskin breeches, heavily fringed, which were thrust into cowhide boots, a blue woolen shirt, and a black soft sombrero, all showing much service. Jack's clothing was much the same, except that it was more "fresh" and richly ornamented with a profusion of buttons as well as being embroidered in different colored silks, after the manner of the Mexicans. The belt of Giant George was fastened together in front by a

large square clasp of solid gold, the leather richly embossed.

The clasp had engraved upon its surface the legend—

"GIANT GEORGE OF ARIZONA,

"FROM LENA REYNOLDS, *nee* LAWRENCE,

"THE ANGEL OF THE PINALENO RANGE."

The belt of Arizona Jack was a fine specimen of artistic workmanship also, and had a clasp of silver, on which was engraved—

"JOHN M. BURKE,

"(ARIZONA JACK).

"WHOOP HER THROUGH OR BU'ST."

Mrs. Lena Reynolds, the "Angel o' ther Penarlayno Range," as she was called by the "citz"—she, who had passed through dangers, sufferings and grief to such an extent that it was a mystery to all that she still lived, was of slender form and pale as death; the recent death of her father, sister and loving husband, to whom she had been married but three short months, having so prostrated her with grief and anguish as to bring her to the very gates of death. She had remained unconscious when captured by the bandits until released shortly after by Giant George, and since then, to the great joy of all, she had seemed more like her former self.

The Senora Juanita Refugio was a lady of commanding presence, and of iron will and strong passions. She was of Castilian descent, and had an abundance of midnight hair and black, piercing eyes.

Since the rescue of her daughter, and her own recovery from partial insanity, caused by the capture of Marietta by the Apaches, she had grown retiring and silent.

Marietta, the rescued maiden, was an angelic being, fair as a Southern rosebud, with large and languishing dark eyes, and a wealth of ebon hair. They both looked upon Giant George and Arizona Jack as their saviors, and upon Lena Reynolds as their guardian angel.

With these necessary descriptions and explanations, we will now proceed with our tale; commencing on the second day after the "cleaning out" of the bandits and the blowing up of the Slip-up Mine by the "Tarantula of Taos," which had revealed the rich "lead" beneath the old one, and caused the "citz" to run wild with joy. Hank Holbrook, from this unlooked-for luck, and from having Giant George, Arizona Jack and the "Angel" beneath his roof, got so full of his own merchandise that, Tom Jones, at the request of Marm Holbrook, bore him out to the bake-oven in the rear of the "Nugget," and thrust him into the same for the remainder of the night.

The sun arose bright and gilded the peaks of the range as the horses intended for the party were led from where the animals had been stalked for the night, to the front of the "hotel," fully equipped for the journey to Tucson, the saddle-bags of the scouts being filled with eatables by the ever-thoughtful and motherly landlady, who was, as her husband expressed it, "The fu'stest kaliker-kivered human that ever struck ther locate."

As may be imagined, there had been much weeping among the females as the time drew near for a separation. Marm Holbrook and Lena Reynolds had become very dear to Juanita and her lovely daughter, and *vice versa*, but their departure had already been delayed by the prostration and capture of Lena, and they well knew that Senor Refugio would be nearly insane with grief and anxiety, he doubtless having already scoured the country in search of his wife and daughter.

At last, however, the scouts ranged themselves with the "citz" along the bar for a parting drink with Hank, it being the latter's "set 'em up."

"George," said the landlord, as he slowly passed out the glasses, one by one from beneath the bar, as if he wished to delay his friends as long as possible—a tremor in his voice and his eyelids twitching nervously—"George an' Jack, I shell go plum lunyfied arter yer hes levanted; an' ther' has bin sich a heft o' hellishness sloshed onter ther burg now an' then, that I'll be 'spectin' 'Paches er mail-bag-slashers ter run in on us, an' clean out ther hull fit-out.

"Some sort o' cussed hellyuns 'll burn ther burg, er blow us all up, ef they find out ther boss scout hes skuted. Tom Jones ain't nowhar when it comes ter engineerin' a reg'lar cut, slash and shoot stompede."

"Gittin' luny ain't goin' ter sot yer back much, Hank," returned the giant. "Ye're used ter jim-jams; an' ef yer gits wind o' any biliousness threatenin' ther burg, pour down 'bout a quart o' bug-juice, an' go b'ilin' fer 'em.

"I'mbettin' my nag ag'in' a cotton-tailed rabbit that yer'd skeer reds er bag-slashers when yer gits a meenadgery in yer butes."

Tom Jones rejoined indignantly:

"Dog-gone my skin ef I 'siders yer a jedge o' my caperbilities, Hank. Yer wer' allers chuck-full o' p'ison whenever thar war any one wanted ter defend ther burg, an' didn't know B from a bull's-foot. An' now, es ter a blow-up, ef hit 'u'd turn out like ther last one, I'd say, let her whiz!

"I hopes, George, yer'll skute back this-a-way soon es yer kin, fer I'll be lonesome es a broken-leg'd buffler on ther Staked Plains. 'Sides that, ef Hank gits ther jim-jams, I c'u'dn't manage him wo'th shucks. He's skeered ther Angel so she's goin' ter leave fer Gold Gulch, fer she knows he's goin' on a double Niagara errigate."

"Ef Hank doesn't behave hisself, I'll choke ther breathe outen him when I strikes ther Sardine-box ag'in!" threatened the giant scout, lifting his glass, as did all the others, including the landlord, the latter replying to the attacks upon him:

"Pards, yer all knows Hank, an' that he undercomstumbles, glides, floats easy-like without 'zac'ly knowin' hit, inter ther jim-jam state, forgittin' all 'bout his locate, biz, an' ole 'oman. I shell be purty consider'ble keerful arter this, an' not pour down more'n four fingers ter onc't, 'lowin' some fleetin' periods ter skip atween drinks; fer I swa'n I doesn't b'lieve I c'u'd stan' another sich hullsale meenadgery, circus an' side-show combernation es war shoved at me las' time I gut on a jim-jamboree.

"I'll flip-flop over ther range nex' time, I

reckon, an' then Marm Holbrook kin run ther 'Nugget' to suit herself. Boyees, I'm feelin' blue 'bout ther gills, 'count o' yer skutin' Tucson-way, but ther weemin must be tuck hum, I s'pose.

"Hyer's hopin' yer'll skip lively, skin through without gittin' yer heads skinned, an' levant back ter Hank an' ther 'Angel' afore soon!"

"Hyer's fun!"

"Down she goes!"

"Good-luck, Hank!"

Such outeries filled the room, as the boisterous crowd drank their liquor; then Arizona Jack called for cigars, and a silence fell upon the "citz," for Marm Holbrook partly opened the door which led into the kitchen, thrust her head through and raised her hand, with the fore-finger extended in caution, as she exclaimed:

"Boyees, I wish yer'd simmer down jist a leetle, an' ef yer hes gut ter sling gab like a passel o' ole maids, shove it out kinder easy, fer the 'Angel' air comin' down ter see Juanita an' Marietta off, an' say by-by ter George an' Jack. Hit's ormighty queer that nothin' kin be did inter this burg without ther help o' whisk'.

"I'm gittin' 'cited, an' hevin' a strong appertite ter say cuss-words, which, bein' a meetin'-house woman, I orten't ter do. I'm gazin' at yer, Hank, consarn yer! I kin tell, by the look o' yer eyes, that yer hes gut a leetle over the line, an' I swan ef yer doesn't cut off sharp, I'll chuck yer inter ther bake-oven an' plug up ther door, ontill Big George an' Jack levants back ag'in."

"Hush-h-h! Hyer come ther gemernine fenders!"

With this rather lengthy warning Marm Holbrook closed the door gently, and the occupants of the bar, all of whom gazed at Hank with smothered laughter, kept silence, for they heard the women tripping down the stairs on their way to the horses on the street.

Hank rested one hand upon the bar-slab and the other on the shelf behind it, facing the door through which his spouse had delivered her address, his eyes glittering vacantly at the same after it had been closed, and his red face bearing a decidedly puzzled expression, as if he was meditating upon his probable sufferings for a drink if Marm Holbrook should fulfill her threat and imprison him in the bake-oven, if he again got overcome with drink.

Not the slightest notice did he vouchsafe to the occupants of the bar, his face wearing an absent look as thoughts plowed through his muddled brain, such as he would have maintained had he been solitary and alone.

Suddenly, however, he recovered, and placing his elbows on the counter, he rested his head in his hands and gazed at George and Jack, saying:

"Pards, I reckon I'm goin' ter hev a sorter tough time ontill yer 'roves back. Ther ole 'oman air allers on stilts when ther 'Angel' air 'round. 'Pears ter me she air gittin' lunyfied. I swan ter cristy, hit makes me feel es though I warn't no more 'count than a cotton-tailed rabbit, an' I hev ter take a big drink ter saterfy myself that I air somebuddy."

"Ef she'd let me erlone I wouldn't pour down half ther p'ison I does."

"Be good to yourself, Hank, old boy," said Jack, quickly and feelingly. "Keep a stiff upper lip."

"There's the ladies, George! Come, Hank, shake! We're off this time!"

Arizona Jack grasped Hank's hand and gave a hearty shake, as did George. The two scouts then sprung out the door, followed by the "citz" en masse.

Jack at once assisted Juanita and her daughter to mount, both the ladies weeping silently, as were also Marm Holbrook and Lena Reynolds.

The scouts, wishing to end the scene, sprung into their saddles without further ceremony.

"I shall most certainly go to Tucson and visit you soon," said Lena. "God bless and protect you and lead you to your home in safety!"

"Jist es sure es I air a meetin'-house 'oman, I'll levant Tucson-way wi' ther 'Angel,' an' see yer!" burst out Marm Holbrook.

"Dang hit! Thar, I knowed I'd say a cuss-word, fer I'm e'ena'most es flighty es I war when I laid in ther bake-oven all night, when ther long legged, slab-sided, long-ha'r'd, whisk-sucker gut Hank b'ilin' drunk, an' both on 'em went ter sleep on ther floor ahindt ther bar.

"I b'lieve my brains gut ruptur'd by ther hellishness I've hed ter stan' o' late, an' I'm so flustered that I didn't know my back ha'r war down. Consarn it! I ain't fit ter 'sociate with Piute squaws, feelin' es I does."

No one save Lena Reynolds heard more than half of Marm Holbrook's words.

When the scouts waved their sombreros in farewell, and galloped down the street amid the whoops and yells of the "citz," the "Angel of the Range" clasped her arm around the landlady's ample waist, and with loving words led the good woman into the "Nugget," in a more pacified state than might have been expected.

Hank stood in the bar-room door, swinging an empty bottle over his head and yelling:

"Rah fer Giant George an' Arizony Jack!"
"Rah fer ther Angel o' Penarlayno Range!"

CHAPTER III.

THE TARANTULA OF TAOS.

As the sun had reached meridian on the day previous to the departure of the scouts for Tucson, with the Castilian ladies, a very strange and peculiar looking man might have been seen some ten miles down the range from Sardinebox City.

He was seated upon a projection or spur of rough rock, some twenty feet above the bed of a wild gorge in the adamantine mountains; the sides here and there, and also the base of the almost perpendicular cliff being dotted with clumps of dwarf cedar, cacti, and patches of wire-like grass, while the middle of the bed of the gorge was covered with a carpet of fresh, green, tender grass, that had evidently sprung up since the last heavy rain had formed a torrent therein.

Lariated amid this verdant grass was a long-legged, lank horse, that appeared to have seen hard service and little feed; the animal showing at the same time points for speed and endurance.

In a clump of cedars, directly behind the strange lone human being, were a saddle, bridle, extra lariat, and *malettos* of buckskin; also a tin cup, canteen, and blankets, the full fit-out of a borderer.

But the man himself is deserving of closer attention; and, as he is in the habit of traversing plain and mountain alone, he is addicted to soliloquizing, which will enable us to ascertain much in regard to his adventures, character and intentions.

At his belt, which sustains greasy and ragged buckskin breeches, hangs a pair of Colt's army "sixes" and a huge bowie. Cowhide boots, a blue woolen shirt, that has long been a stranger to soap, and a crumpled, wrinkled, black sombrero, with wide brim, make up his costume—all in such condition that he might well, in a more civilized locality, be taken for a scarecrow.

As we introduce him to the reader, his elbows rest upon his knees, his lank hands clasp his cheeks, his chin is upon his palms; and although in this position, his jaws are working energetically, while at times he ejects a prodigious stream of tobacco-juice afar over the cedar-tops below him.

Suddenly he changes his position, leaning back against a loose rock, and grasping a decanter that stands by his side, and which is about one-third full of whisky.

Holding the bottle at arm's length, he indulges in soliloquy:

"Dang hit, an' double dang hit! Ef I doesn't feel bilious when I gaze at yer, thinkin' what in thunderation I'll do when ye're empty. Doggone ef I c'u'd tell ef I war ter be hung! I sw'ar that word flopped outen my beef-trap afore I thort it!

"S'pect I will git strung up a limb some considerable afore a month o' Sundays. Whar war I? Now, I recommends. I hopes ter be hashed by a grizzly b'ar ef I c'u'd calkerlate how long I hes bin in this hyer locate. I've bin a snoozin' nighly all ther time, and when I did open my peepers, nobuddy c'u'd prove by me who I war, er whar I war.

"Hit's cussed lucky that I war so ormighty sick that my stumjack wouldn't 'low whisk' ter scout 'round inter hit, er ther bottle would 'a' bin empty, an' I'd bin plum crazy. Ef I should hev much more jim-jams hyer, hit 'u'd be ther last o' ther Terrantaler.

"Wonder what air goin' on inter Sardine-box? I reckon I woked up ther burg some consider'ble by blowin' up ther Slip-up; an' I've got ter come round ter biz an' ruminate over ther siterwation o' things.

"Thar's 'bout fourteen hundred and forty swarms o' bees in my kerbase, an' all on ther hefty biz-buz. My head aire swelled 'nough, I reckon, ter 'commerdate that amount without crowdin' 'em. But whisk' 'll make them flicker, an' down she goes. Hit'll take ther hull o' what's hyer ter put me on ther squar' level toward futur' perceedin'."

As he spoke he glued the decanter to his lips, and took a deep draught with evident satisfaction; in fact, with insane eagerness. He then pressed his hot brow with his claw-like, dirty fingers, as he replaced the decanter on the rock

by his side with great care, all the time sweeping the gorge and cliff sides with suspicious gaze, and finally fastening his eyes upon his horse, the only familiar object in the wild vista.

The expression of his face changed quickly from mirth to rage, fear, terror, and self-condemnation, and, in turn, these feelings would change to others, proving that the man's mind was in a most demoralized condition.

Quickly he grasped the bottle again, and took another deep draught, after which his eyes grew less wild, and his expression more free from the dread apprehension that had been most noticeable.

Again he broke out in soliloquy:

"Double-up an' dang me, ef I hain't bin ther worstest mixed pilgrim on ther range! But ther ding-dong air comin' back inter my iron heart, an' ther buzz-buzz in my mammoth brain air simmerin' down, an' kinder flickerin' inter a soothin' lullerby, produced by Hank Holbrook's soothin'-syrup, which air likewise perducin' a hefty hump in my errigatin' pipe by gittin' down purty near ther bottom o' ther bottle.

"I sw'ar I know I shill hev more jim-jams ef I gits out o' whisk; fer when I woked up from my len'thy see-ester, I see'd more cur'ous anermiles squatted roun' on ther rocks then Barnum ever hed in all the menadgeries since he begun bamboozlin' ther folkses in civerlize with a one-hoss side-show.

"Ther bottom of this hyer big crack in ther range war kivered with ail sorts and sizes o' snakes; an' I'll sw'ar I see'd one swaller my critter without wakin' er stoppin' ter salerwate him, ter make ther hoss go down easy like. Thet's what made me conclude ter crawl up hyer.

"I reckon hit war 'bout es speedy a crawl—an' I'm gamblin' on hit—es ever any human tuck in his'n. I tored my bestest an' only wardrobe, 'sides my meat, an' I'm jammed up some consider'ble. I'm stiff es a wagon-tongue, an' purty well sot back all 'roun'.

"Howsomever, I'm danged sartain that ther 'citz' o' Sardine-box don't s'picionate that I'm ther pilgrim that blowed up ther Slip-up. Nobuddy see'd me, I reckon, 'ceptin' Hank, though thar must 'a' bin one human 'sides him, fer he war plump asleep when I got the baptize ahint ther bar.

"Mebbe so hit war Marm Holbrook. Hit warn't a trick that anybuddy 'ceptin' a kaliker-kivered human 'u'd ever think of. Ef hit hed bin one o' ther 'citz,' he'd 'a' plug'd me with his 'six,' an' axed me who I war arterward. Thet's 'bout ther biz, I reckon; an' I'm goin' ter skute back, an' lay fer chances ter corral whisk' enough ter last me ter Tucson, ef I does hev ter run chances o' gittin' elerwated up ther mesquite et ther eend o' a lariat.

"Nobuddy orter buck ag'in' a lost orphan like me, 'speshly in my condish.

"I'll take another snifter. I'm gittin' ter feel more nat'r'al-like—doggone ef I ain't!"

Again the decanter was raised to the trembling lips, and a deep draught was poured into the large mouth of this strange individual; he again holding the bottle upward, while regret at the rapid diminution of the whisky forced

back much of the satisfaction and relief the drink afforded him.

Half of the liquor that had been in the decanter had disappeared, and this fact seemed to affect the drinker greatly for some moments; but he banished and repudiated all thought of the subject, drinking again and again. Then rising to his feet with difficulty, and standing erect, but in a swaying condition, and still clutching the decanter, as if his very life depended upon its contents—as perhaps, in his deplorable condition, it did—he stood trembling for some minutes.

But the tall form of the lone wanderer did not long remain unsteady. Soon he brought down his boot, hard upon the rock, and by mere force of will became steady as that rock itself; apprehension and nervous dread having apparently left him, his muscles contracting, his blood circulating with lightning-like rapidity; the change produced by the fiery poison he had drank.

"Ther skin o' ther snake air good fer ther bite," he cried out, in a self-satisfied voice. "I 'gins ter feel like myself ag'in. I'm ther Terrantaler o' Taos! Doesn't yer hear ther ding-dong o' my iron heart? I'm a border hero! I snoozes on ther tip-top peaks o' ther Rockies, above ther flip-flop o' ther buzzards' wings.

"I war borned with a full set o' grinders, an' when I strikes hit rich I shows my quartz, 'stead o' purchasin' a mill. I drinks a gallon o' bleed every mornin' an' takes contracts startin' stiff-yards. I'm a roarin', ragin' terror when I gits on ther war-path; an' I've bin knowed ter howl so loud an' un'arthly that a hundred painted 'Paches jumped from thar critters, crawled inter perrarer-dog holes out o' pure shame, an' never war see'd since. Reckon they're crawlin' thar till yit; an' 'll fotch up an' strike fresh breathe in Chinee, whar they'll find the longest-ha'red humans ter scalp thar bees in the worl', giner'ly speakin'.

"I'm a ole he cantankerous cuss, an' sp'ilin' wi' prussic acid mad, hankerin' ter cut, slash an' shute wi' any fourteen hundred an' forty-four pilgrims what's gut sand enough ter buck ag'in' me. I'm a lost orphan on short whisk', but when I lets off a long breathe, bowlders trembles an' cedars snap off, jist fer fun, ter start a circus!

"Whoop-er-up! Whoop-er-e-e-e! Ker-whoop! I'm leavin' toward ther nighest whisk' et stompede-speed, an' I'll kerral some er bu'st! I'll bamboozle Hank, an' skeer Marm Holbrook ontill she sheds her back-ha'r.

"I'm ther Terrantaler o' Taos, an' I never lost a leg. I've gut heaps o' duct, but ormighty leetle whisk'. Ker-whoop! Cl'ar ther track fer ther Terrantaler o' Taos; er ye'll flip-flop speedy 'over ther range 'ter 'grim-land.'

With these concluding words the Tarantula of Taos sprung down the rough, jagged rocks, at the risk of breaking his neck, equipped his horse—the animal having been gazing, with evident wonder, at its master, while he had been speaking—and, bounding into his saddle spurred out from the range, keeping withing the line of cedars, and between the same and the mountains, the decanter being still clutched, with but a small quantity of whisky remaining in it."

CHAPTER IV.

APACHES ON A TRAIL.

A NIGHT and a day have passed since the hellish dance of the Apache squaws around the corpse of the bandit, and again the bright moon lit up a most unearthly and infernal scene.

The Apache braves, who, it will be remembered, were but six in number—the wounded survivors of the war-party of El Orso—have examined every hoof-print and every branching trail of the scouts and the "citz" of Sardine-box, and have discovered at last the mutilated bodies of their chief and the braves who, at his order, accompanied him in the pursuit of Lena Reynolds and Marietta; they having escaped from the lodge in which they had been confined, into the dense thickets in the rear of the Indian encampment, by pulling up a stake, and crawling under the skin lodge.

The Apaches proceeded to wrap the swollen corpses of the chief and warriors in blankets, and then bound them fast with lariats. They then conveyed the bodies to the scene of the desperate fight, their former camp, where there was nothing but a huge heap of ashes now remaining of their camp tricks, and the lodges of their braves.

Wounded horses, left by the whites, had been slain, thus serving for food, and as we again bring the hideous horde of howling hags before the notice of the reader, they are again whirling slowly, with ghost-like movements, in an up and down motion of the body, crouching one moment to the earth, then rising to a half-bent position, and slowly circling round the ashes—all that remains of their braves—while, as each reaches a certain point in the circle, she gives a fiendish howl and jabs an arrow-head into her flesh, this death-dance and self-torture being supposed to manifest their grief, for the slain.

This lasted until their strength failed them, until their muscles refused to act, and only hoarse and gurgling sounds could be forced from their throats, the intense, insane fury which had ruled them still existing in their minds, though it was no longer in their power to express themselves.

For a while all threw themselves upon the earth and lay panting, their forms and limbs writhing like squirming snakes, until they in a measure recover themselves. Then all, in a single file, follow the braves, four of whom bear the bodies of El Orso and the warrior who had been killed with him, the other two leading a horse.

They pass through the thickets by a narrow trail at the base of the cliff, from which the squaws had viewed the fight, and proceed but a short distance, when they halt at the very foot of a perpendicular wall of rock, fully a hundred feet in height.

Here the leader, after a moment's inspection of the rough cliff-side, turned toward it, parting the bushes that grew at its base, when an arch-like opening is revealed, into which they all proceed, some of the squaws carrying dry dead-wood in their arms, and at once kindled a fire in the cavern, the roof and sides of which reflect the fire-light and glitter with a blinding brilliancy, as if myriads of diamonds had been set in those adamantine walls.

But little time was spent by them in preparation or in ceremony.

The dead were laid upon natural projections of rock at the far end of the cave chamber, and the two horses were then led near to them. The squaws then joined in a most unearthly chant, as the six braves strode within ten feet of the doomed steeds, with bows in hand and arrows fitted to the string.

Three warriors stood near each horse, as thus described, the fire-light flashing upon them, their eyes glittering from out the frame-work of white gypsum and vermillion-bars, and upon the hideous horde of hags that stood in a half-circle in the rear of the braves.

A bow and arrow, together with a long scalping-knife, and also a quantity of half-cooked horse-meat are laid beside the bodies; then the howls died down to silence, and the savage horde stalked out from the natural tomb into the moonlight, when they gather fragments of rock that had fallen from the cliff-side, and wall up the opening.

In single file and at a fast trot, the six warriors in the lead, they all proceeded on the back trail to the place at which they had left their horses. Then the braves, and two-score of the younger squaws, who had lost braves in the fight, and had no papposes to call them back to their village—these mount and steal slowly down toward Sardine-box City, bent on murderous revenge. The remainder gallop west at headlong speed.

The following morning the braves and squaws lay secreted near Dead Man's Gulch, awaiting the coming night that they might inspect the surroundings of the burg. They were well aware that the utmost vigilance and caution must be practiced, or they would be exterminated utterly. Their intention was to steal around the outskirts of the town, capture for the torture any stragglers who might fall into their hands, and do whatever damage to the white foe that lay in their power in a stealthy manner, and without exposing themselves to death or capture.

Upon the very night preceding the departure of Big George and Arizona Jack with the rescued Castilian women down the range, these hideous hags, with their six attendant braves, crouched at different points among the mesquites around Sardine-box City, thirsting for revenge. The "citz" were, however, making a "night of it" at Pilgrim's Palace, and lucky it was for those of them who lived in brush-shelters beyond the shanties, and amid the boulders, that the jollification which celebrated the discovery of the new and rich "lead" by the blow-up at the Slip-up Mine, kept them in the "Palace" until the gray streaks of morning shot up eastward.

Then they decided that they would remain and see the scouts and the two ladies off; consequently the fiendish Apaches made no capture, secured no victim for the torture, and therefore crawled away, taking up positions in clumps of cedar on the side of the mountain range, and rendered doubly furious by disappointment, as well as by having discovered such a number of white men, all in the very highest spirits, in the streets of Sardine-box City.

But when the red demons, a little later, saw the Giant and Arizona Jack departing down the range with their recent captive, Marietta, who had been the cause of their leaving their village to meet El Orso—her presence having caused the halt of the war-party, and the consequent fight and destruction of the same—when they saw this, and the madwoman whose trail they had often struck, in the party also, then they were filled with exultant glee, for, at once they decided that the two scouts were now guiding and guarding the white squaws to Santa Rita, from whence, in a raid, El Orso had captured Marietta.

Passing beyond Sardine-box City, down the range for a mile or more, they again secreted themselves until night should favor their mad gallop southward in pursuit of the scouts and the white squaws, a thirst for vengeance, blood and torture maddening their brutal and merciless minds.

CHAPTER V.

OFF FOR GOLD GULCH.

THE Giant Arizonian would have felt much more anxiety in regard to leaving Lena Reynolds in the Sardine-box City had not that lady decided, previous to the departure of the scouts, to take the next stage for Gold Gulch, where she intended to stay for several days with a lady whose acquaintance she had formed when on the journey from St. Louis.

The scouts had not been gone two hours when the "hearse" rattled up to the Nugget, and Lena tripped from the "bestest room" down the stairs to the kitchen, where Marm Holbrook, with much bustling and excitement, was getting ready to accompany Lena, this arrangement having been made within the hour.

"Come, Mother Holbrook," said Lena, with something of her old vivacity, which greatly pleased the landlady, "the stage is waiting and we will have a splendid ride along the range this beautiful morning. Thirty miles will not fatigue us in the least, and I anticipate a good time in your company. We have never traveled together but once, and then as captives to those horrible Apaches."

"Bless my soul, dearie!" exclaimed Marm Holbrook, in much excitement, "don't mention the or'nary painted skunks, er I shill git more flusterated than I bees. Mebbe so ther greasy, dirty torturers mought buck ag'in' ther hearse an' gobble we'-uns up ag'in'. Then we'd be goners, dead sure an' sartain! Ther good Lord gut us outen that scrape, an' I hopes I'm es thankful es mought be 'specte from a meetin'-house 'oman.

"Howsomever, I doesn't opine that He'd bother with we'-uns ag'in'. Ef we gits inter ther clutches o' ther red hethuns ernuther time, I wouldn't g'in a corn-shuck for my back ha'r; though I can't b'lieve thar's a human, no matter how onhuman an' savage he mought be, that 'ud tortur' you."

"I'm powerful full o' glad ter see yer kinder bracin' up. We'-uns hes gut ter take things jist es they comes in this worl'. Ef yer know'd what I hes bin through since me an' Hank skuted from Texas, Arizone-way, yer'd take yer afferdavid that I war tough es a ole raw-

hide, er I'd 'a' flip-floppered 'over ther range' long ergo.

"Thar ain't no use ter git flustercated, fer Jim Doderson air pourin' down whisk' wi' Hank, an' thet 'minds me that I'm dead sure my ole man 'll git on ernuther jim-jamboree soon es we-'uns gits out o' sight. I hes see'd it in his peepers since he 'roved back from Pilgrim's Palace et sun-up wi' ther boyees, an' I'm goin' ter lock up ther bestest room ef yeou bain't."

"I've gut a lunch fer us ter chaw on ther hearse, ef we feels a vacancy in our stummicks. This trip 'll do me a heap o' good, I knows, fer I hes heerd they hes gut a slab meetin'-house slapped up in Gold Gulch. I shill 'tend every gatherin' inside o' hit, and I doesn't know but what I'll squat on ther steps atween meetin's, fer I hain't bin inside a 'C'ristyun fact'ry,' es Hank calls 'em, fer more'n four year, an' I've fergut 'bout every hymn an' pra'r I ever know'd. An' thet ain't tall strange, bein' es I hes bin sloshin' 'bout in so hefty a'mount o' hellishness.

"Thar I go until I'm plum' out o' breathe, but when I does git a show ter sling gab ter a slam-up ginerwine female 'oman like yeou—"

Here Marm Holbrook came to a sudden stop, seemingly dumfounded at her own audacity, but she continued a moment after:

"I swan I didn't mean thet, dearie, fer thar ain't ernuther sich a angel es yeou bees in this hyer wicked worl'. I means ter say, when I kin git er 'oman ter gab at, I runs on until I doesn't know who I air er whar I air.

"Hit makes me sick 'nough ter puke my teeth out, an' my toe-nails off, ter hear ther or'ney lingo ther "citz" an' Hank shoots off. Thar, I won't say no more. Yer knows 'bout how I hes bin siterwated, an' what I hes bin through, an' yer knows I 'preciates bein' with yer, an' I thanks ther good Lord yer come back ter Marm Holbrook, though I'm powerful sot back when I think o' ther cause o' hit.

"What did I tell yer? Didn't yer hear thet howl an' laugh? Hit puts me in mind o' ther 'Paches.

"Thet's Hank, an' I knows by ther sound he's goin' ter hev 'em, an' hev 'em bad. Ef we-'uns warn't goin' ter be gone so long, I'd git Tom Jones ter help me sock him inter the bake-oven an' chuck a big rock ag'inster ther door."

The good landlady was here forced to stop for want of breath, her rotund red face being covered with perspiration, while she mopped her cheeks and brow with her long apron. She then smoothed her hair at the little mirror, and shook out the skirt of her dress.

Lena Reynolds had been quietly sipping a cup of coffee while her motherly friend had thus been rattling off, well knowing from past experience that Marm Holbrook would keep it up until she could talk no more from pure exhaustion. The words of the landlady had, however, created but little interest in the mind of her invalid guest, and that for the reason that poor Lena had gone through so much sorrow in the preceding four months—one soul-torturing event following another in bewildering succession—that she had sunk into a dazed condition of mind, which was proof against being appalled by any future

event, no matter how dread and horrible, that she might yet be doomed to experience.

"Ladies, I opine hit's 'bout time fer us ter rattle wheels toward Gold Gulch."

Thus spoke Jim Doderson, the stage-driver, as he thrust his head through the partly-open door, his whip in his hand.

"We-'uns'll be thar in 'bout two mule squeals, Jim," returned the landlady quickly, for she well knew that Jim was anxious to be addressed by Lena, and she was resolved to disappoint him.

"I war opinin' thet yer wanted ter git outside o' 'bout four fingers o' whisk', an' ter sling gab wi' Hank, er we'd be inside yer ole hearse afore now.

"Come, dearie, le's levant; an' I want yer ter gi'n Hank a word o' warnin', else thet won't be nothin' left o' ther Nugget when we-'uns glides back."

Lena Reynolds drank the last of her coffee, and without a word walked into the bar, followed by Marm Holbrook, with lunch-pail and bundles in her arms.

Hank's face turned a shade redder, his nose took on the color of claret, and his eye-lashes twitched nervously as Lena entered the bar.

He was forced to lean heavily back against the decanter-shelf, and brace right and left with his arms, to keep an approach to steadiness; a precaution that was in vain, for his round bald head seemed too heavy to be kept in an upright position, falling first to the right and then to the left.

"Hank," said Lena, in a pleading tone, "don't drink any more than is necessary to prevent derangement of your brain. I ask this for your wife's sake, for my sake, and for your own.

"A good, free-hearted man like you ought not to torture his system and weaken his brain with stimulants. We are going now, and I hope I shall find you well and hearty and sober on my return. I shall take good care of Mrs. Holbrook."

Hank managed to change his position by falling forward against the bar plank, upon which he leaned one elbow and supported his head with his hand.

Although very much under the influence of liquor, he was evidently abased and greatly ashamed of himself on account of the presence of the Angel; and had there been time, or had his mind been clear enough to realize that Lena had been coming through the bar on her way to the stage, he would without doubt have crawled in among his demijohns and secreted himself, thus avoiding the humiliation that was now torturing him, notwithstanding the muddled condition of his mind. No other human being in the world would have so affected him. Lena was, in his estimation as well as in that of all the "citz," far superior to all other created beings; she was their benefactress—the Angel of the burg.

Bringing all his will-power into play, and somewhat sobered by the lady's presence, Hank strove to relieve her mind by denying that he was in the condition which her words and manner seemed to attribute to him.

"I didn't s'pose," he said, "thet I sh'u'd hev

ter say by-by ter ther Angel, feelin' so ormighty biliious an' or'nary. Hit must be that my ole 'oman hes bin chinnin' some o' her asserfettidy gab 'bout me.

"I war wo'sted when I gut tuck in by ther 'Paches, I knows; an' I didn't git no 'tention nor bug-juice ter keep my hand squar' an' level.

"Ever since then I've bin chuck full o' chills an' nerrallergy, an' I hed ter take a pull et quinine an' whisk', er flop over, roll up in a blanket, an' lose a heap o' dust by shettin' up ther Nugget.

"Ef I've done anythin' ter make a rough riffle in yer thinkin' ap'rattus I'm dod-blasted sorry, an' I'll chaw my own years off right hyer afore yer gits inter ther hearse. I ain't wo'th shucks noways, an' yer needn't ter bother 'bout ole Hank.

"I shell soon be fitted ter a slab overcoat, an' be planted under ther mesquites, an' then Marm Holbrook kin run things ter suit herself, bake-oven an' all, without me."

The concluding words were spoken as Hank gazed in a wavering manner toward his spouse. Reproach was expressed as strongly as it was in his power to do it—somewhat blurred, however, by the maudlin tears that welled into his bead-like eyes as he alluded to his own death and burial. His reference to the bake-oven—in which Marm Holbrook had been forced to spend the night through fear of the Tarantula of Taos, who was, at the time, on a jamboree with Hank—maddened that good lady greatly, and she retorted with fierce indignation, and in a shrill voice:

"Hank Holbrook, yer puserlanimous ole whisk'-sucker! I hate yer es bad es I does a greasy 'Pache; an' ther sooner yer take a flop over, an' grunt out yer last breathe, an' air nailed atween slabs, ther better hit'll be fer ther burg!"

"An' when yer bees planted, I hopes yer won't sprout an' come up; fer a small crop o' your sort 'u'd bu'st up ther hull 'Nited States. Thar ain't ernuther sich in Arizone, thank ther Lord! Fer ther terrortory c'u'dn't perpel wo'th shucks, ef thar war.

"She's bin only jist on ther crawl ever since yer crossed ther line from Texas-way. I know hit's purty rough"—this she said, noticing Lena's look of reproof—"fer a meetin'-house 'oman ter be 'bleeged ter sling that sort o' gab et her ole man; but I'll sw'ar—yes, I do sw'ar, an' I'd put in some bed-rock cuss-words ef yeou warn't hyer, Lena—I've hed 'bout es much ter put up with lately es a cast-iron 'oman c'u'd stan' without gittin' all broke up.

"But, come on! I won't waste any more breathe this-a-way. Hank, ef ther wolves, an' snakes, ou' ther hull devil's menadery gits sifted onter yer, lock up ther "Nugget," take a bottle o' whisk' an' skute up ther range whar ye kin git fresh air, an' kin kick 'roun' without doin' much damage; er yer mought crawl inter ther bake-oven.

"I don't want ter find things mixed hyer, when I 'roves back. Ef I does, thar'll be blizzards, northers, harrycanes, an' cyclones, 'nough roun' this locate, to take every ha'r yer hes left outen yer head, afore yer can hunt a hole ter crawl inter!

"Ya-as, I'm comin', Jim! Durn his ole whisk'-soaked carkiss! He does worrytate an' flustercate me ontil I e'ena'most jump outer my socks! I've chawed my tongue 'bout half off, now."

Marm Holbrook strode like a thirsty cowboy who sees a "bug-juice bazaar" ahead, out of the "Nugget." Then, throwing her bundles viciously through the window, she climbed up the hind-wheel spokes, and crawled through the window of the coach, losing sight, in her anger and excitement of the fact that there was an easier mode of entrance.

As much as she was respected as the mother of the burg, the "citz" who witnessed this proceeding of the worthy landlady, roared with laughter, as did also Jim Doderson, the stage-drive. But Marm Holbrook was busy with her numerous packages, and happily ignorant of the cause of their extravagant mirth, or she would have been rendered doubly furious.

As it was, she was not in an enviable frame of mind on her departure from the "locate" which had been her home for so long, and the scene of so many strange, startling, and horrible, as well as comical experiences and happenings.

Lena Reynolds lingered, with pity and genuine sympathy in her face, look, and tone, toward the poor slave of drink. She extended her hand to him as she said:

"Good-by, Hank! Please don't make yourself ill by drinking so much. I must get you into some other kind of business, I see.

"Good-by, and have more respect for yourself. You are a good, warm-hearted, generous man, and you really ought to strive to overcome your appetite for liquor. We will return, I hope, in a few days, and I trust I will find you well and happy. Again, good-by."

Hank had clung to Lena's hand as a drowning man catches at the first and last object in view. The tears rolled down his cheeks, and there was an expression upon his face that showed clearly he had no confidence in himself, and dreaded the future above all things; regretting most intensely the departure of Lena Reynolds from the "Nugget."

But before he had time to realize it, she was gone, and he heard the whip as it hissed through the air, and the wheels cranking and grating, as the stage was being turned about. Then he staggered around the bar, supporting himself by a grip on the slab, and thus gained the door, where he stood, bracing himself with both hands, one on each side.

Then, with all the strength of his lungs, he yelled:

"'Rah fer ther Angel o' Penarlayno Range!"

CHAPTER VI.

LYING IN WAIT.

THE Tarantula of Taos had not the slightest idea what length of time had elapsed since he climbed up the shaft of the Slip-up Mine: and, as he afterward decided, must have dropped his pipe, which soon afterward was the cause of the tremendous explosion.

He had been hired to do this very thing by the bandit chief, who was the agent of Lena Reynolds's dastard cousin, and had been paid for

the cowardly work; but his prolonged spree with Hank Holbrook had afforded him so much fun—the landlord of the "Nugget" impressing him so favorably—that he decided if there was any chance of crawling out of the agreement he would do so.

After he had seen the bandit chief hanging from the mesquite, and knew that the plans of the latter had failed, he began to feel less apprehensive in regard to his connection with the outlaws.

His nap behind the bar at the "Nugget" had been broken up by Marm Holbrook pouring a bucket of dish-water upon his head. He had traveled continuously the whole of the previous night, and the following night he had been forced to deprive himself of sleep, while waiting for the time to arrive to explode the mine; and, later on, in his escape down the range—during which ride he was so intoxicated that he found it difficult to keep his seat in the saddle—such a thing as rest was not to be thought of.

Consequently he had, when he reached the gorge, fallen into a deathlike slumber, which lasted until the middle of the following night, and from which he awakened in a state of mania, in which he was first introduced to the reader.

After a time he recalled the fact that he had appropriated a decanter of whisky at Hank's bar, and he cautiously scouted down to his saddle-bags, giving a wide berth to the hideous phantoms which his disordered imagination saw tearing up the side of the cliff. Overcome at last, the "Tarantula" sunk upon the rock senseless.

In this manner passed two days, and a part of the third night; and the wretched man suffering the agonies of the lost. At length his mind became more natural, as has been related, by him again resorting to the decanter.

He knew well that the fearful sights, which his disordered imaginings had called up, would return to him when the whisky gave out; that again he must suffer almost unendurable torture, and which would undoubtedly cause his death in some horrible form or manner. He therefore resolved, as we have seen, to revisit Sardine-box City, and procure the liquor, upon which he felt that his life depended. This he would do, at any and all risks.

He now left the gulch, and proceeded up the range, at times raising the now nearly empty decanter upward, between his eyes and the moon, grating his clinched teeth in mingled anger, regret and apprehension; his brutal, scratched, bruised and bloated face contorted, and his huge red nose fearfully swollen, from having come in contact with the rocks.

Ragged, and besmeared with dirt and grease, his eyes filled with insane wildness, he now crushed his dilapidated sombrero upon the back of his head, clasped the bridle-reins in his left hand, and the decanter in his right, and proceeded through the thickets.

"Dang my cast-iron heart!" he exclaimed, suddenly, in a deep, hoarse voice, the unnatural sound of which startled him, and caused him to jerk his horse to a halt, and his "six" from his scabbard, as he gazed into an adjacent thicket,

With weapon thus cocked and pointed, he sat for a full minute, and then broke out into a loud laugh, which was also cut short; for it awakened echoes that appalled him, and caused him to tremble from head to foot.

For a while, this peculiar wanderer of the wilds gazed suspiciously on all sides; he then took a slight sip from the decanter, and broke out in low soliloquy. At first the words came in a hoarse whisper, and were almost inaudible:

"Dang my cast-iron heart, ef I ever afore war in sich a mixed condish! I hain't gut no more vim nor ambish than a fresh-borned calf, an' I air about es shaky in ther legs. Dog-gone ef I kin reco'nize my own chin-music! I c'u'd 'a' swored that somebuddy else war spokin' that war 'bout ready ter 'skip over the range' with consumshe, hevin' only 'bout half o' his breathin' mersheenery left.

"I'm es lonesome es a bad shot Curmance left in ther middle o' ther Staked Plains fer ther buzzards an' kiotes ter pick an' chaw at. Ther ding-dong o' my iron heart hev simmered down ter ther quiver o' a dyin' buffler-gnat's wing, an' I'm as onstiddy as a bob-tailed hummin'-bird what's tryin' ter take hit's reg'lar whiz. I shell puke up my toe-nails and knee-pans, ef I doesn't take a hefty snifter afore soon!

"Ther Terrantaler o' Taos hev gut down or mighty low. I 'gins ter smell Tophet, an' I kin 'most hear that ole cuss wi' ther horns an' long tail crack his huff's together wi' pure glad, an' chuck in fresh deadwood on ther big blaze whar he 'tends ter roast ther Terrantler ter ther whittled off eend o' all time."

"Cuss me ef this hyer ain't a leetle too bilious! I'm gittin' hit pasted onto me too thick, an' I won't stan' hit. I c'u'dn't clum up ther peaks ter take a see-aster 'bove ther-flip-flop o' a buzzard's wing, no more'n I c'a'd climb a rainbow an' carve ther Roarer Boary Alice!

"Git, old hoss, er I'll chaw yer years off! We'll glide a leetle furder 'fore we spills ther 'mainder o' ther whisk'. Dang ef I doesn't kerral a nigger an' make him roll a bar'l o' bug-juice right ahindt me wharever I glides arter this!

"Ther spiders air spinnin' cobwebs inter my throat, an' my in'ards 'pears ter be chuck-full o' alkerlie. I c'u'dn't raise a reg-lar whoop-er-ee nat'r'al-like ef I shu'd bn'st my yellin' mersheen a-tryin'. Git, ole boss! Perceed, slope, glide, skute, levant toward whisk', er yer big boss air a stiff coon!"

And on up the range amid scattered boulders, cacti and clumps of cedar and mountain pine, the dilapidated "border hero" proceeded, eventually arriving in the vicinity of Sardine-box City.

Sardine-box City lay to the north, just below his covert and not two thousand yards from the place at which he had left his horse. On the street were the entire population, mostly collected in front of the Nugget Hotel, and the attention of all seemed to be fastened upon the trail that led from the street down the range toward the south.

Following this trail with wondering eyes, the "Tarantula" discovered Giant George, Arizona Jack and the two Mexican ladies, all riding down the range. Had he delayed climbing the

range ten minutes longer, he would have been discovered by the keen eyes of the giant scout.

A strange, bewildered expression now appeared on the face of the crouching man. This, however, soon disappeared, changing to relief, and even triumph, as he decided, from what Hawk Holdbrook had already told him, that the scouts were starting for Tucson to escort the two Castilian women to their home. And he mentally put them down for a pair of fools for undertaking such a trip at a time when danger and death lurked in every mile.

After meditating a short time, the look of pleasure and exultation deepened upon the face of the "Tarantula," and he again broke forth in soliloquy:

"Dang my iron heart, ef thar ain't a openin' fer a pilgrim 'bout my size an' cuteness!

"Ef I kin git ther deadwood on enough o' Hank's whisky to keep me open or shet, jist es I opines ter be, I'll bamboozle some duckets inter my pouch outer ther ole Don Refugio et Tucson.

"I kin go jist a-b'ilin' down-range, scout 'roun' ther camp o' Giaut George, then skute fer Tucson, tellin' ther ole Don that I kin put him on ther trail o' his wife and darter. I'll make ther ole cuss shove out a heap o' dust afore I guides him; an' then I'll happen onter ther camp where ther scouts an' weemin bees, p'intin' them out ter the ole Cast-steel-yun, an' claimin' ther rest o' ther wealth what he'll 'gree ter fork over.

"Ef I hed ther 'sand' ter kerral ther hull caboodle, an' ther 'dust' ter shove 'em through ter civerlize, I'd bu'st Barnum ter flinders ther fu'st season, an' he'd want ter crawl inter a kiote-hole, pull ther durn hole in arter him, an' stay thar, chuck-full o' indig' an' shame, ontill Grabri'l toots his horn.

"By ther bones o' Boone, what's that?"

The "Tarantula" rubbed his eyes vigorously, and then fixed his gaze upon the side of the range, beyond Sardine-box City; his face was stamped with the utmost amazement, not unmixed with apprehension.

He was unable, however, to decide whether the forms that he saw were real, or merely another invoice of the images conjured up by his disordered fancy, like those that had terrified him at the gulch. The "border hero" upon his hands and knees stared up the range; where, to his utter consternation, he saw that the forms were real, and that they were none other than hideous Apache hags and paint-daubed braves.

"May I be chawed inter hash by a griz' b'ar, ef thar ain't a passel o' greasy, blood-suckin' 'Paches!"

"What in thunderation air comin' nex'? Biz air beginnin' ter brighten fer ther Terrantaler, fer I sw'ar nobuddy hev see'd ther red hellyuns 'ceptin' me."

"Ef I doesn't make ther rifle, gettin' whisk on ther sly, I kin raise hit on ther long-ha'red red skunks what's layin' fer chances ter skin ther heads o' ther 'Sardines,' by playin' scout an' warnin' ther burg. Dog'd ef thar ain't 'dust' in hit!"

The eyes of the "Tarantula" followed the movements of every skulking form, until they

had all disappeared in the canyon. Then he was forced to the conclusion that the Indians had given up the design of attacking the town, or laying for loose "citz." This greatly disappointed the border bummer; and stealthily and slowly, taking advantage of every cedar clump, prickly pear patch, and boulder, he made his way toward a point in the rear of the Nugget Hotel, and near the celebrated bake-oven of Marm Holbrook.

CHAPTER VII.

A RAID ON THE "NUGGET."

ENSCONCED within a small clump of cedars, the "Tarantula of Taos" gazed into the street; having a view of that portion of it between the Nugget Hotel and the next shanty to the north of it.

Soon after secreting himself in the cedars, the "Tarantula" was forced to admit to himself that he was the most fortunate man in Arizona; for two of the "citz" advanced from the "Nugget" toward his covert, filling him with abject terror, for he knew if he was discovered he would be in a very dangerous position.

The "citz" would decide that he was one of the bandits, who had escaped their vengeance; and Marm Holbrook—whom he believed to have seen him, and to have thrown the water on him when he was asleep behind the bar—and Hank, too, would reveal the fact that he had been at the "Nugget" on the day and evening previous to the fight, and the blowing up of the mine.

As he was a stranger, if he gave a truthful account of himself, it would be the means of condemning him to the rope, while a false one would probably be known to be false, and would also lead the infuriated "citz" to elevate him up a limb—all this, considered in an instant, caused the miserable wretch to tremble like an aspen-leaf, and the sweat of terror to stand in great beads upon his forehead.

But his fears vanished as quickly as they had flashed upon him, for the two miners turned to a clump of bushes a couple of yards to his left, and secreted a bottle, which the eager watcher felt assured contained the sole remedy for his most intense sufferings and prostration, for he distinctly heard the gurgling sound of the liquor in the neck of the bottle.

But the "Tarantula" heard more than that. He heard words that gave him great relief and joy, and that removed a heavy load from his mind.

"Ya-as," spoke one of the miners, "I hez 'zamined ther outcrop, an' hit's ther richest 'lead' I hes see'd on this or any other range. Hit war ormighty lucky ther bag-slashers blowed up ther mine, fer ther boyees w'u'dn't 'a' struck ther lower 'lead' in a month o' Sundays."

"'Cos why? Hit war ter one side, plum' under ther range. I'm bettin' ther cuss what touched her off gut blowed inter cat-fish bait. I hain't gut over my jamboree till yit, an' we'll hev hit heavy arter ther weemin glides up ter Gold Gulch in ther hearse."

"Tom Jones air goin' ter manerfactur' some

jimjam side-shows fer Hank that'll make a heap o' fun; though Hank, I reckon, hes gut enough hellish sights inter his brain-box ter run him wild without any extras. He's drunker now nor any blue-coat ther night arter pay-day. I gut a bottle ter "cache" afore he gits too cranky ter shove p'ison on ther stren'th o' a chalk-mark. Weuns air all ter meet et Pilgrim's Palace, soon es ther hearse glides up ther rise.

"Come on, Jim, er we mought lose a rifle o' fun."

The "Tarantula" was dumfounded by this avalanche of good luck, that had so unexpectedly been hurled upon him, when he so much stood in need of it.

It was evident that he was not suspected of having blown up the mine; in fact he doubted if either Marm Holbrook or Hank had mentioned his being in the burg.

Again, the "blow-up" had proved a most fortunate thing for the "citz," and the "Angel;" for as he now understood it, a rich "lead" had been disclosed by the explosion, and this he resolved to profit by, in some way, in the future.

While thus bewildered by his startling and unlooked-for good fortune, another event favored the Tarantula.

This was the rattling up of the stage to the Nugget, which drew the attention of the "citz."

"Dang'd ef I doesn't git ther ding-dong back inter my iron heart an' run ther hull range!" muttered the Tarantula, in a low voice, as he jammed his hat on the back of his head, thrusting the brim upward and assuming a look and manner that indicated the most devil-may-care state of mind that was conceivable.

He was getting back to his normal condition, and for the time had forgotten his recently-formed plans in regard to the scouts and bamboozling Don Refugio, as well as the presence of the Apaches so near the town.

He had not long to wait before he saw Marm Holbrook hurl her bundles into the coach and crawl in through the window after them, which caused the Tarantula to cram his sombrero into his huge mouth to smother his laughter, while he tore up the leaves and grass spasmodically in his mirth.

But the appearance of Lena Reynolds changed the emotions of the watcher, his eyes being now fixed upon her slender and graceful form, and her pale, yet beautiful face.

Deeply impressed thongh he was, his wits were now keen, his mind clear, and he reasoned that Hank was in the doorway watching the embarkation of those so closely connected with him. Now was the Tarantula's time to act.

As these thoughts flashed through his mind, he crawled to a point which enabled him to proceed toward the rear of the Nugget without being discovered by any one.

Then, as a barrel stood on the far side of the kitchen door, and toward the street, he crawled around the corner of the building and thence to the back entrance, keeping the barrel between him and the street.

Hastily but carefully he stepped to the entrance of the bar-room, the same being partly open, and peeped into the bug-juice department of the Nugget, the smell of the liquors being

more agreeable to his nostrils than the fragrance of the sweetest flowers.

Hank was now standing in the front doorway, and the hiss and crack of the whip of the stage-driver at that moment struck the ears of the Tarantula and warned him that he had no time to lose. He therefore sunk to the floor as the coach rattled up the street, crawling over it and behind the bar as Hank called out, "'Rah fer ther Angel o' Penarlayno Range!'

Though he felt himself safe from immediate discovery, the "Tarantula" was in no enviable frame of mind; for, as his luck had apparently changed, he feared now that the "citz" would crowd in for a prolonged debauch, in which event he must be discovered, for he could not long maintain such a cramped position. And discovery, under such suspicious circumstances would place him in a position of great danger, especially if Hank should make known the fact that he had been at the "Nugget" on the day previous to the attack made by the bandits.

Hank, supporting himself by the bar slab, dragged his feet along the floor and around behind the bar, where he braced himself for a moment.

There seemed to be none of the "citz" any longer in the vicinity; and the lurker, becoming desperate at the bare thought of the consequences of his being discovered, resolved upon immediate action.

Without making the slightest noise, he crawled at once from his hiding-place, clutched a leg of Hank in each hand, and with a strength born of desperation hurled the landlord over the bar; Hank striking the floor with such force as to shake the building, and being rendered speechless by the fall.

Then closing and barring the door, without wasting a moment of time, the "Tarantula" proceeded to business, arguing that the "citz," who knew that Hank was drunk, would suppose him to have locked up, and gone to bed.

The bummer was now master of the situation, being in possession of the "Nugget Hotel." But he was in total darkness.

However, a flint and steel soon remedied this; and, lighting a candle, he placed the same upon the bar, and then, with the air of a conqueror, he grasped the glass of liquor that poor Hank had poured out, and drank it with great satisfaction, giving a sly wink, as he did so, at the senseless landlord. He then returned the tumbler to the bar, and exclaimed in guarded tones:

"Dang'd ef ther ding dong hain't gut back inter my iron heart! I'm ther Terrantaler o' Taos, an' never lost a leg. I giner'ly knocks the last flicker outen any human what stan's between me an' whisk', when I'm rearin', tearin' dry. This air a new deal, an' I holds ther bestest keerds in ther deck. Hank, ole man, I hated most all-firedly ter give yer a extry flip-flop, but I c'u'dn't count on yer. Yer tongue wabbles too much, an' yer mought get yer old iron-hearted pard's neck inter a lasso noose.

"I'm hyer arter bug-juice, which I hed terhev or bu'st up Arizone from A to Z a-tryin' ter git hit. I must levant now, an' nobuddy 'll know I've bin hyer; fer ye're too drunk ter undercomstan' what bucked ag'in' yer, an' ther boyees'll sw'ar

yer locked ther door, an' then went ter sleep, an' fell down offen ther bar.

"I takes a John-demmy this trip, ter hev a dead sure thing on not gittin' short o' whisk', an' gittin' mixed in with ther devil's menadgery. I reckon yer hes some duckets, but I ain't givin' myself away, by confiscatin' 'em. Yer won't miss a John-demmy, thar's sich a hefty supply on 'em. So long, Hank!"

"The Terrantaler o' Taos, what see-estars on ther tip-top peak, 'bove the flip-flop o' a buzzard's wing, 'll see yer later. A-jew, old pard! Pleasant dreams!"

As he thus spoke, the border bummer, having secured a gallon demijohn full of whisky, replaced the candle where he had found it in the kitchen. He then unlocked the back door and peered forth.

Not a human being was within sight, and he passed at once around to the rear of the building and thence to the thicket, where he secured the bottle belonging to the miners and thrust it into his pocket. Then, as cautiously as had been his advance to the town, he retreated.

In another half-hour he was in the thicket where he had left his horse; but he had not been long in his covert when the tramp of ridden steeds struck his ears, and he quivered with terror as a horde of paint-daubed Apache braves and squaws passed quite near him, their faces contorted with a thirst for blood and revenge, their black, snake-like eyes darting piercing glances at every clump of bushes or cluster of bowlders, and seeming to the horrified "border hero" to pierce through the foliage and into his very soul.

No mortal ever felt more relieved than did the "Tarantula" when the red pirates of the prairie and mountains disappeared from his view down the range.

CHAPTER VIII. AMONG THE "CITZ."

THE Gold Gulch stage, within which were Marm Holbrook and Lena Reynolds, the mother and the "Angel" of Sardine-box City, disappeared over the spur of the range northward, kerchiefs waving from the windows to the last, the sombreros of the "citz" being whirled in the air in all directions; the good-wishes and good-bys being yelled frantically on all sides.

No sooner, however, had the "hearse" vanished from view, than all regained their head-gear, knocking the hats against their legs to free the same from dust, and then the "citz" collected around Tom Jones, their worthy sheriff. The latter now found himself the most important personage in the burg for the first time in some days, and he immediately assumed the domineering manner and self-important pride that, in his way of thinking, belonged to his office, but which he never displayed when Giant George was in the burg.

"O-o-o-h, yes! O-o-o-oh, yes! O-o-o-o-oh, yes!" he yelled, in imitation of a court-crier.

"I, Tom Jones, Sheriff o' Sardine-box, orders a gatherin' o' all ther Sardines interested in ther good o' this hyer burg et Pilgrim's Palace, right erway. Meetin' 'll open in 'bout ten mule-squeals on important biz."

A chorus of cheers rung through the street,

and all followed the sheriff into Pilgrim's Palace, which was situated alone and to the north of the Nugget Hotel, among the opposite row of shanties.

The landlord of the Nugget was a liberal, whole-souled pilgrim, and respected by all. The fact that Marm Holbrook, his wife, was greatly pestered and worried by her husband's terrible sprees gave the "citz" no little sorrow, for they were all greatly attached to her as the mother of the burg. This decided all the miners in the conviction that something must be done at once.

All this had been freely discussed since the previous evening, and Tom had called this meeting to decide what was best to be done to save Hank's life; for that was just what it amounted to, as all were confident that the little landlord could not live through another attack of delirium tremens.

They were not left long in suspense as to the nature of the business; for Tom burst out immediately, evidently, as on the former occasion having a most heartfelt interest in the person of whom he spoke.

"Feller-citz, this ain't no time for extra no-count chin-music; an' I'm dealin' ter-day in pure, solid an' plain 'Nited States. We-'uns hes a heap ter do at ther mine, an' ther burg must look fresh an' neat when ther 'Angel' roves back. Ter-day air a off day, I knows, but I hes 'ranged a p'ogramme that I reckons yer'll help me ter kerry out.

"Marm Holbrook, ther mother o' this hyer burg, one o' ther bestest kaliker-kivered humans that ever flopped a flap-jack or nussed a sick dust-hunter, she hev gone wi' ther 'Angel' ter Gold Gulch; an' she hes levanted so ormighty billious and worried 'bout Hank, that she didn't know 'nough ter git inter ther hearse by ther door. I swan she jist clumb up an' squirmed in through the winder, es yer all knows.

"Ther 'Angel' war ormighty blue es 'gards Hank too, an' I doesn't know o' nothin' what 'ud make 'em feel more fuller o' glad then ter find Hank slam-up, right side up wi' care, standin' in ther Nugget door ter welcome 'em, plum sober, an' with a smile on his face like sunshine on a barn-door.

"Now, I knows that ef we-'uns doesn't play ther game I'm thinkin' on, that he'll either be stiff, an' ready ter nail up 'tween four slabs an' plant, or else dead-gone with jim-jams, an' so cussed full o' lunification that we-'uns'll hev ter lariat him ter a tree, or he'll stompede roun' ther range, an' mebbe-so jump down inter ther canyon.

"He'll be crazier than a alligator-gar with its tail cut off, I air ormighty sure, ef we-'uns 'lows him ter keep pourin' down p'ison. He's checked fer Tophet, on ther cyclone Express, ef we-'uns don't chip in 'fore his game's over. Hank's purty wild now, an' he knows he's goin' ter hev a show ter study nat'ral en' onnat'ral hist'ry by 'lustrations; that all ther menadgeries in ther world air goin' ter consolerdate an' j'ine ter-gether fer his 'speshul benefit, givin' him a free exhibish', 'fore feedin' ther animiles, what'll show a hefty hankerin' ter chaw on his 'nater-my.

"He knows hit's comin', an' that air a p'int in

favor o' my p'gramme. He ain't got ter ther jump-off yit, but he's glidin' fast that-a-way, and ther only show ter save his bacon an' drag him through air ter git in ahead on 'em an' run a oppersition jim-jam.

"Howsomever, I don't reckon yer undercomstan's my p'ogramme, so I'll 'splain.

"I shot a black wolf t'other day, skun ther critter, an' stuffed ther hide sorter nat'r'l like, puttin' in a pair o' glass marbles fer peepers. Yer knows Hank hed a orful time wi' a black wolf onc't before, when we laid him out dead drunk on ther boulder, under ther two cusses, Black Ben an' Sport, what we'd strung up.

"An' that ain't all by a dog-gone sight, fer I've gut a hefty 'mount o' snakes, which I 'tends ter tie strings to an' drag 'em 'crost ther floor, mebbe so drappin' some through knot-holes from up chamber.

"We'll run in jim-jams on Hank ahead o' time an' skeer him so dang'd bad that he'll break off short, though we'll hev ter gi'n him some in a taperin' way. Thet's my p'ogramme, feller-citz, an' hit must be kerried through ter-night, er Hank's a goner sure.

"Now, all git ter biz et ther Nuggeter-night, er pore Hank'll go over ther range.

"Come, we'll errigate ag'in, an' then snooze!"

In ten minutes after this arrangement had been made the "citz" were all fast asleep.

CHAPTER IX.

CALCULATING CHANCES.

GRASPING the bottle from his pocket, as the Apaches disappeared, the "Tarantula" drank a goodly portion of the contents, congratulating himself that good luck still hovered in his near vicinity.

He then jerked a pone of corn-bread and a chunk of bacon that he had thrust in his pocket while in Marm Holbrook's kitchen, and began devouring it like a ravenous beast, it being the first food that he had eaten in four days, a fact which, in itself, had tended not a little toward demoralizing his mind, and torturing him with visions of the most horrible description.

The "Tarantula" knew every trail within the boundaries of Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado quite as well as did George the Giant, and he was also posted in the manners and customs of the Indian tribes, being, in addition, well-acquainted with every detail of border life. The secrets of trailing and "covering" a trail, or avoiding the leaving of "sign," had been a necessity to him for years in his vagabond pilgrimage in quest of "soft scraps," the "ducats" of the "fresh" or "tenderfoot," whom he could "bamboozle" into purchasing "salted" claims, or claims, the glittering outcroppings of which contained not a fraction of the precious metal.

This knowledge of the country and of Indian character was not brought to the front, he reasoning, and with good ground, that the Apaches would "lay low," secreting themselves during the day, and the coming night dash down like the wind on the range, on amid the foot-hills on the west side, until near a point where their reasonings would cause them to conclude that the whites would encamp. This done, they would proceed with the utmost cau-

tion, pouncing upon their prey in the early morning hours, when the sleep of man is the deepest, most deathlike.

This having been well pondered upon, the "Tarantula of Taos" decided that he must delay no longer, or he would be "scooped in" on his way down the range by the Apaches. He was positive that if he struck out east into the open plain, and proceeded thence south, the Indians, if they discovered him, as they doubtless would do, would not jeopardize themselves by a chase after him, thus running the risk of being themselves discovered by some of the "citz" of Sardine-box City.

His programme having been thus settled, he proceeded at once to carry out his plans; his horse having had a long rest at the gulch, and also good feed, and being now fresh, and equal to hard service for some time to come.

The animal was bridled quickly, the lariat coiled and attached to the saddle-horn, and then the "Tarantula" mounted, with surprising activity, clasping the demijohn in one arm as affectionately as a mother would a babe; the contents of the bottle having, to the vision of the wanderer, tinted the rough range and arid plain, the cacti, cedars, and bowlders with *couleur du rose*, and transformed him from a terrified, weak and trembling wretch, to a regular "come and buck ag'in' me" desperado, with a strong "hankerin' for bleed," providing he had a show to "scoop things without losin' ha'r."

But, as he was about to urge his horse in the direction of the plain, an idea seemed to strike him, which changed his plan, and caused his face to contort into a most comical expression, while his lips drew up together from all points; forming a puckered-up circle, from which issued a low, peculiar whistle. Then his tall, gaunt frame shook with suppressed laughter, and a cunning leer came into his blood-shot eyes. He sprung from his saddle to the ground, returned his horse to the thicket, then stalked to a patch of prickly-pear within the densest portion of which he secreted the demijohn, as if he feared it might take wings and fly away. Returning to it, with a happy second thought, he indulged in one more long drink, at which he felt greatly relieved; for he had not until then sampled its contents, and for aught he knew it might contain "some sich slush es wine, without vim enough in it ter make a cotton-tailed rabbit gi'n a extra jump."

He feared also that some one might pass near, and hearing his horse, proceed to examine the "sign," and thus discover what was more precious to him than gold or diamonds. But, leave it he must. However, he again proceeded toward the range, at the foot of which he placed his treasure in a more secure hiding-place. He then clambered up the mountain-side, which at this point was almost covered with cedars, loose bowlders, crevices, and gaping rents.

For a mile, the "Tarantula" proceeded cautiously, keeping himself screened from below, to a point where he knew there was a rough-walled gorge. This, he believed, the Apaches would select as their hiding-place during the day.

As the mouth of this gorge was reached, the face of the "Tarantula" lighted up with satis-

faction; for, far below his position, was the savage horde, now engaged in devouring the carcass of a horse which they had killed. Their mustangs were staked in the bed of the gorge, near its head; while fully two-score of Indians, hideous, half-naked squaws, with six paint-daubed braves, were tearing the blood-dripping meat like half-starved wolves—a hellish scene, and one which the "Tarantula" resolved to slightly change.

For a moment the "Tarantula" viewed the scene below, and made his calculations as to the position of certain huge rocks which, if hurled down, would crush and maim such of the red hags and braves as would come in contact with it.

These were at points where it was impossible for the Indians to observe him, either before or after his proposed plan of warfar.

He soon gained the position he most desired. There he selected two bowlders, beneath the inner side of which he could thrust his lever.

Quickly the "Tarantula" peered through the foliage of the trees, as by a herculean effort he sent the first of the rocks thundering down the side of the gulch. On it went, bounding and whirling from shelf to shelf, crushing pines and cedars as if they were but waving grass. Then he saw the terrified Apaches spring from their crouching attitudes on the ground, and, bewildered and demoralized, rush in a horrified mob from the base of the gulch toward the opposite side, knocking each other down in their mad flight.

But all in vain. The huge rock shot downward with electric velocity, and whirled over the bed of the gulch, crushing two of the squaws beneath its merciless adamantine sides, and maiming, or badly bruising, three others.

Only for a moment, then the "Tarantula" sprung some feet from where he stood to another huge rock, and while the gulch rung with yells of agony and howls for the dead, another rock went crashing lightning-like down the gulch side, striking sparks of fire as it ground against the iron-permeated granite; but doing no injury this time to the forewarned Apaches.

Without an instant's delay the "Tarantula" sprung into his saddle, and urged his horse from the foot-hills to the open plain and then southward toward the pass, satisfied that the snake-like eyes of the Apache sentinel were not fixed upon him.

Giving his beast the spur, the animal, with its long neck outstretched, flying over the prairie like the wind, in a far-reaching gallop, while the rider yelled in his characteristic boasting manner:

"Whoop-er-e-e-e! Ker-whoop! I'm ther Boss o' ther Bowlders! I'm ther 'Pache-smasher o' Arizone! I'm chuck-full o' p'ison, an' on ther war-path. Ker-whoop! E-e-e-ho! Gaze et my be-yutiful pictur', an' run yer peepers down ther hull len'th o' my natermy."

"I'm ther Terrantaler o' Taos, an' never lost a leg! Jist listen ter ther ding-dong o' my iron heart. I runs ther 'Migrate Serloon fer my own pertickler 'commerdashe. I doesn't keep no chalk, an' I doesn't keer fer duckets."

"I'm a free an' airy frontier terror, an' a

border hero, fu'st class! I see stars on ther tip-top peaks, 'bove ther flip-flop o' a buzzard's wing, an' yer kin hear ther ding-dong o' my bestest bleed mersheen from ther foot-hills, without strainin' yer years ter listen."

"I kin turn a cyclone inter a balmy zephyr, by whistlin' ag'in' hit; an' my breath air p'ison. When I lays myself out ter irrigate at a water-hole er a river, ther catfish goes flip-flop ter onc't, fer I leaves them high an' dry."

"I skins 'Pache heads, an' starts stiff-yards by contract. I'm a bad citlzen. I'm a 'notcher,' (one who takes human life for the sole object of gaining reputation as a desperado), a 'rustler,' (one who steals cattle on the American side of the Rio Grande, runs them into Mexico, sells them, and then loads himself with Mexican plunder on the return trip), an' when I gits low in duckets, I runs with 'dinglers,' (stage-robbers, or road-agents).

"I'm a roarin' rager on honest biz, on ther war-path, an' b'ilin' over wi' whisk' an' pure prussic acid hyderphobic indig'!"

"Whoop-er-e-e-e! Ker-whoop! Stan' from under, 'Paches, when you smells my breath! Whoop-er-up! Ker-whoop!"

CHAPTER X.

THE SHERIFF'S PRESCRIPTION.

AN idea of the proposed proceedings in regard to giving poor Hank a free exhibition of horrible scenes, with the hope thereby of preventing the thirsty landlord of the "Nugget" from further reckless indulgence in intoxicants, to the extent of plunging him into the terrible condition of mania, which had on previous occasions caused much trouble and tribulation, besides bringing him to death's door, was now fully understood and indorsed by the "citz."

The measure proposed might be a severe one, nevertheless, it seemed the only way open to save poor Hank from excruciating agony, and perhaps death.

A committee of arrangements was chosen with Tom at their head, who proceeded down the street toward the "Nugget," the sheriff remarking:

"Yer see, boyees, ther thing hev gut ter be did; fer this hyer burg c'u'dn't be run wo'th shucks without Hank an' Marm Holbrook. Hit wouldn't be nat'r'l 'tall hyer without 'em. Ef Hank sh'u'd git on another hefty cyclone jamboree, an' git jim-jams, jumpin' inter ther canyon, or skutin' 'over ther range' some sich on-nat'r'l way, Marm Holbrook 'u'd go b'ilin' roun' plum' lunified. She'd be one o' ther most howlin'est' wildest widders yer ever see'd; though she does sling prussic acid lingo at him so dang'd often.

"Hit 'u'd purty soon bu'st up ther 'Nugget,' our ole stan'-by, an' she'd skute Texas-way, es she's allers threatenin'. Ef she sh'u'd, I'm opinin' that ther 'Angel' would levant with her; fer I've hearn Marm Holbrook, givin' her a heap o' treacle talk 'bout Texas, sayin' she'd git well an' strong, down Antone-way."

"Sides that, she's urgin' Giant George ter git a persish t'other side ther Staked Plains, es Gov'ment scout ag'in' ther cussed Curmanches.

"This air serious biz, when yer comes to walk 'roun' hit, an' 'zamine ther p'ints clean through,

Of course they c'u'dn't take ther 'Blow-up' 'long wi' them; but I sw'ar I ain't sich a or-mighty mean human es ter sot my whole mind pannin' dust, or scratchin' gravel arter 'pockets.' I wants some fun sandwiched wi' mine; an' hit's more'n half o' life ter hev a show ter 'so-
ciate wi' folkses what yer knows air simon-pure solid an' squar' human's, what hes bin through hellishness wi' yer, an' yer knows they'll do ter tie to.

"Thet's my opine, gi'n right out on the open perrarer, or on ther peaks. I asserwates we'-uns can't glide 'long smooth ef we loses Hank; an' we'll be all broke up ef Marm Holbrook skins out, an' ther 'Angel' glides along wi' her. Thet'll t'ar Giant George away from Arizone, dead sure an' sartain.

"Hank's gut ter be saved, ef we'-uns hes ter tie him on a mustang, stompede ther anermile an' shake ther 'fects o' whisk' outen ther good-natur'd leetle cuss.

"Hold on, boyees! Dang'd ef I ain't afeard we'-uns air too late. Thar's somethin' wrong, fer ther 'Nugget' air shet up tight es a sprung b'ar-trap. Glide easy, an' we'll 'vestergate things. I'm es narvous es a ole maid on her fu'st trip inter a menadgery."

As the words of the sheriff implied, he and his followers had reached the "Nugget," when he perceived that the hotel was closed; as the reader knows, this was the work of the "Tarantula of Taos."

All the "citz" who were not chosen to accompany and assist Tom, were advised to "lay low" up-town, as they might interfere with the proposed arrangements.

With panther-like steps the committee approached the "Nugget," all listening intently; but no sound reached their ears.

Tom tried the front door with great caution, but it was barred, and all proceeded to the rear. A loneliness very impressive to the "citz," prevailed in and about Marm Holbrook's headquarters—the kitchen of the "Nugget."

Much to the sheriff's joy and relief the outer rear door opened as he raised the latch; and he stepped upon the threshold, glancing quickly toward the door that opened into the bar. But all was darkness, and he could not see whether the bar was opened or closed.

Whispering some directions to his companions, who at once started to comply with them, the sheriff now entered the kitchen, struck a match, and lighted a candle. Then he advanced cautiously to the door, and opened it into the bar, satisfied, from the sounds, that Hank was in a sleep so deep that he would not be easily awakened.

Tom was not in the least surprised to find the landlord stretched upon the floor. A glass and decanter upon the slab indicated that Hank had been indulging in his favorite beverage, and had fallen asleep.

A low hiss from the kitchen soon drew his attention, and he repaired to the culinary apartment instanter.

Two of his fellow-conspirators were there, each having a box, and one with a ball of fine black linen twine.

A large box by the door was opened, and turtles, frogs, and many-colored lizards were

quickly secured to pieces of this fine cord, these being made fast with small tacks to the bar, as well as to the wall on every side. Then another box was opened, and snakes of various hues and sizes were drawn forth, one by one, an incision with a pen-knife being made in the skin of each of the squirmers, through which they also were secured and placed among the other reptiles.

A long portion of the string was then stretched from the outer kitchen door around the side of the building, to and through the front door. This was then opened and the line was carried through into the kitchen, the ends being tied together, thus making a circle of string to which, at intervals of twelve feet, huge rattlesnakes were fastened by shorter strings, allowing the reptiles full play.

These arrangements having been made, two barrels were placed side by side, their heads up, near the door which gave entrance to the kitchen—the purpose of which will presently be made known—and two boards removed from the floor of the "bestest room," at some distance apart.

One of the men now appeared with the stuffed wolf-skin, which was placed just inside the front door and secured in a natural position, where it would not interfere with the working of the proposed "rattlesnake circus."

All the "citz" were then summoned, and removing their shoes, crept up the stairs, laying their hands in two rows upon the floor at the vacant spaces where the boards had been removed. Their faces were covered with black masks, which they had gotten up in obedience to the orders of the sheriff, when they agreed to see the show through.

Don Diablo, the burro of Giant George, was then led to the Nugget, presenting such a horrid appearance that his master would never have recognized his faithful brute pard.

The huge ears of the animal were enveloped in red flannel, strips of the same being also fastened around the body of the donkey, while its legs and tail were profusely decorated with turkey and buzzard-feathers. The huge horns of a mountain goat were made fast to its head, while the "mop" of a buffalo-bull, cut in sections, furnished hair to hang from forehead, under-jaw and fore legs. Nor was this all. A huge pair of eagle-wings were tied one upon each shoulder of Don Diablo, and, being held in an outstretched position, gave the beast a most fearful appearance.

The men who had thus disguised the burro actually shrunk away after standing it upon the two barrels, its hind feet upon one and the fore feet upon the other, facing the bar, it was such an unearthly nondescript.

The eyes of Don Diablo, aroused by this treatment from his usual disinterestedness in mundane matters, shone in the candle-light from behind the drooping mop of hair.

There were two sets of decanter shelves behind the bar, with a space three feet wide between, where Hank had intended to place a mirror when he could get one from Gold Gulch. After the arrangements of Tom Jones, as detailed, had been perfected, the latter carefully blindfolded the slumbering landlord and then with the assistance of two of the "citz," lifted him carefully,

placing him in a seated position in the cavity mentioned, between the two sets of shelves, leaning him against the slabs on either side.

This done, they all retreated with hasty but quiet steps, no sound being heard except the writhing and hissing of snakes, the dragging of turtles along the slabs and an occasional flopping of the ears of Don Diablo.

The scene in the bar of the Nugget was not merely strange, but horrible.

Tom Jones then passed to a point at the side of the Nugget, directly in the rear of poor Hank, on the outside of the building, and, jerking his revolver, fired six shots in rapid succession. He then sprung back into the kitchen, and stood to watch the effect upon the landlord.

The form of Hank twitched at the first shot, at the second he squirmed, and as the reports continued he snorted like a frightened horse, throwing up his arms and trying to tear the handkerchief from his eyes. At length he succeeded.

For a moment he sat in a dazed state, his underjaw hanging lax, his bead-like eyes sweeping his dread surroundings; then, as if he could not believe that he saw aright, he began rubbing his eyes vigorously with his fists.

Again he gazed around, sweeping every corner of the room, until at last the hideously-disguised figure of Don Diablo met his view. Then Hank's red face became of a ghastly hue, his eyes bulged from their sockets, his breath came and went in gasps, his form trembled from head to foot—then, with a piercing shriek of fear and horror, that seemed drawn from the wretched man's inmost soul, he sunk backward limp and senseless into his former position.

CHAPTER XI.

HANK IS HIMSELF AGAIN.

ABOUT the same time that Tom Jones and the "citz" were approaching the Nugget Hotel on their way to get up a dramatic representation of the interesting state known as "jim-jams," a dozen Apache braves were galloping down the big canyon from the direction of Dead Man's Gulch, on their way to Sardine-box City.

This small party of warriors had been met by the squaw who had been sent for help by the survivors of the war-party, which had met with disaster and death at the hands of the scouts and "citz." Rendered furious by the news, they had at once headed for the mining-town to seek revenge and scalps; calling upon both the Good and Bad Spirits of their traditions to favor them in avenging the death of their chief, El Orso, and his braves.

But few in number though they were, they decided upon a skulking warfare, their object being to lurk around the town, screened by bowlders and thickets, and to capture any stragglers who might come near their coverts during the night-time, or to sneak in and fire the shanties, pouring a volley of bullets and arrows into the whites as the latter rushed into the streets, and then gallop off to a place of safety.

On dashed these red avengers, paint-daubed and feather-bedizened, their black eyes glittering with a thirst for blood, their quirts bissing

through the air and cracking about the hams of their half-wild, snorting, and foam-flecked mustangs.

So infuriated were the Apaches from having seen the big heap of ashes—all that now remained of the greater part of the war-party of El Orso and the lodges and equipments—so insanely eager for revenge, that they repudiated their usual caution, desperate fury being manifested by manner and look and act.

However, when they halted beneath the mesquite and saw the two rows of shanties plainly revealed in the moonlight, they all sprung to the ground and quickly secreted their animals in a dense thicket, in the middle of which was a small grass-covered "open."

This done, two braves being left in charge of the horses, the remaining ten skulked back to the mesquite, and all climbed upon the bowlder, where, screened from view by the branches, they shot piercing glances up the street of the burg, they being to the south of Sardine-box City, and but a rifle-shot in distance from the first shanty.

Not a word was spoken. By signs they communicated with each other, these being made in a quick and impatient manner, they being greatly puzzled meanwhile, for not a human being was to be seen in the town.

The two bars on the opposite side of the street from the "Nugget" had been closed at a few minutes after sunset, for the proprietors knew what was on the tapis with Tom Jones and the "citz," and as they had kept open all the previous night, they were glad to retire at once.

Still more to surprise and puzzle the Apaches, they heard the six reports of the sheriff's revolver, fired in quick succession, and yet no human form met their gaze, no other sound broke on their ears.

The pistol-shots were a mystery, for the Indians well knew by the sounds that only one man had been engaged in the shooting, he firing the weapon until the chambers were all empty.

However, notwithstanding these reports of a firearm, and the mysterious silence that followed; notwithstanding the seeming desertion of the town, the Apache chief sprung from the bowlder with a silent signal of the hand, and strode toward the town, followed by his braves in single file, each clutching his weapons.

On they went until at the border of the thicket, the last cover they could take advantage of. Then they halted; but as no light was to be seen in the town, except a somewhat dim illumination among the shadows opposite the largest shanty in the burg, which was but a few yards distant from them, the hideous braves, led by their chief, all half-bent, their muscles strained for a panther-like bound, and with their eyes glaring and darting glances in every direction, they stole up the street within the shadows of the eastern line of the buildings.

They could hear nothing, save the squirming and thrashing of the snakes in the bar; as the reptiles, tortured by the strings that were drawn through their punctured skin, writhed in rage and agony. This noise was, to the Indians, inexplicable.

But, in a moment more, a piercing shriek

from the interior caused every Apache to spring backward, and around the south corner of the "Nugget;" their amazement increased from the fact that no other sounds succeeded it.

Without a sound, the leaders sprung through the doorway of the Nugget Hotel, just as Tom Jones, who was peeping through a knot-hole in the partition, had made up his mind to pour some whisky down Hank Holbrook's throat, which, as the sheriff reasoned, would "fotch him back to Arizone;" in other words, enable the wretched man to recover his senses.

With one frantic bound, the Indians landed upon some of the squirming snakes, their heads flying up, and then falling flat upon their backs; while the braves in their rear, being forced over them, fell writhing among the serpents, as howls of superstitious horror and dread terror rung from their throats.

The bar-room of the "Nugget" had presented a most strange, and by no means attractive scene, previous to the advent of the Apaches; but it was little more than a "Punch and Judy racket" in comparison with what followed, when the Indians made the dash inside. Those who did not fall, kept their feet with difficulty, amid the twisting and wriggling forms of their fellow-braves, for a moment only; for they were bereft of all judgment, and completely dazed with the superstitious terror that seized them.

And no less was the intense amazement of the "citz" whose heads were thrust through the floor above; their masked faces being perceived by some of the Apaches, who were by this sight doubly appalled. The maskers themselves were so astonished as was also Tom Jones, that they were incapable of motion, much less of action.

This state of affairs lasted but a moment, however; for sudden transformations, and most awful sounds occurred, close following each other and commingling.

First, the loud yells of the sheriff rung above the wild commotion, as the Apaches on the floor freed themselves from each other, and sprung to their feet with horrible howls. Then the "citz" simultaneously gave a most terrific whoop, and revolvers began to crack on every side.

The warriors bounded through the door, so eager were they to escape the mysterious and unaccountable horrors. But, in their haste they impeded each other's flight, being jammed with great force against the sides of the entrance, while some fell headlong into the street to be trampled on by those that followed.

The whoop of the "citz," and the revolver-shots brought Hank Holbrook "back ter Arizona," as Tom Jones afterward expressed it, "jist in time ter git in some hefty biz in ther liveliest kinder combernashe circus an' meenaderry ever started as a free show."

Hank at once sprung to a standing posture on the shelf. Then, with a terrific yell, he sprung upon the bar, the very picture of agonized terror, gathering his feeble strength for a spring to the floor, and from thence out into the street, that he might escape the hideous specters.

But Don Diablo, having probably come to the conclusion that he had had about enough nonsense, and would be imposed upon no longer;

or, it may have been, recognizing by sight and smell his old enemies, the Apaches, darted from his position on the barrels to the middle of the floor, just at the moment that Hank made his leap for liberty. The landlord came down, in a spread-eagle style, astride of the burro, clasping the neck of the animal in a vise-like grip; probably somewhat more horrified at discovering that what he had believed to be nothing more than a horrible production of imagination was a real, living, unclassed specimen of natural history, to which he was forced to cling, or otherwise roll among more repulsive horrors, in the form of the snakes upon the floor.

Out through the door, into the moonlit street, shot Don Diablo in his horrid "make-up," with poor Hank upon his back; the short hair on the back and sides of the landlord's head standing out "like quills upon the fretful porcupine."

The advent of the equestrian portion of this lively circus, Hank and the burro, was close on the heels of the Apaches, and as the latter, with howls of dread bounded down the street, gazing in terror over their shoulders, and with bated breath, Don Diablo pointed after them in hot pursuit, as if he had suddenly sifted the whole business, and had concluded that he had a right to have his share of the fun in his own way, as it seemed to be all on the "free lunch" system.

But the Apaches had not gone more than twenty yards from the "Nugget," the blaze of the now burning shanties revealing even the smallest article on their persons, when, like the rush of a "norther" around the corner, bounded the masked "citz," Tom Jones in the lead, all yelling like fiends, and with revolvers in hand, full-cocked and ready for business.

Never, perhaps, did human beings run faster than did both the whites and reds; and soon the revolvers of the former began to crack spitefully; as any one of them could send a ball among the flying Indians without endangering Hank. But Don Diablo knew the ground better than did the Apaches; and, as he had been to the bowlder a thousand times, he made a short cut, thus leaving the "citz" clear ground.

In desperate bounds, the savages shot over clumps of cacti, between rocks and around the thorny thickets, their death-howls sounding as they fled.

The two braves who had been left with the horses, hearing the tumult, led the animals to the bed of the canyon; but only five of the ten who had gone into the town dashed down the trail and they closely followed by the "citz." Of these five, but two reached the canyon-bed alive, and they sprung upon their horses, only to be shot from the affrighted creatures, as were also the two guards—not one of El Orso's war-party's avengers being left alive.

The sheriff and the now jubilant "citz" soon regained the level ground, where to their further surprise they discovered Hank, seemingly recovered from his fright, and seated on Don Diablo, looking as natural as possible.

"Tom Jones," he yelled, "what in thunderation's this ye're givin' me? What's bu'sted? Hev I bin ersleep like ole Rip Winkle, an' hes yer turned ther 'Nugget' inter a museum?"

"Can't I take a see-estar without ther danged 'Paches runnin' inter the burg an' sottin' ther shanties erfir? I say, whar's ther 'Angel' an' my ole 'oman? Hes thar bin another blow-up? Air I a man, er a mule? Dog-gone my skin ef I ain't mixed up permise'us-like!"

The "citz" roared with laughter as Hank rattled this off in a wheezy voice, and they bore the poor fellow back to the "Nugget." Then all made a night of it, after releasing the turtle and frogs.

CHAPTER XII.

A NEW PARD.

THE second night after the departure of Giant George and Arizona Jack with the two Mexican ladies from Sardine-box City they were encamped in a gorge of the range, somewhat like that in which the "Tarantula of Taos" had passed his time after arriving from the burg.

But thirty miles have our friends traveled down the range on account of the fatigue of the ladies, and upon reaching a point ten miles below, their intention was to strike out from the range, over the open plain, in a westerly direction toward Tucson, encamping the following night at a water-hole within a day's travel of their destination.

All had partaken of the evening meal, and Giant George and his pard, seated upon fragments of rock, were enjoying a smoke. The ladies, mother and daughter, were a beautiful pair, and seemed strangely out of place in this wild gorge, with nothing but jagged rock, and spur, and peak around and above them.

Graceful as those of a prairie fawn are the willowy movements of Marietta Refugio, her lustrous eyes casting fond glances into her mother's face, and at times gazing with gratitude toward the scouts.

Both the ladies were naturally filled with thoughts of their home; their conversation, which want of space prevents our recording, being in regard to the loved husband and father in Tucson, who had organized a party of his friends to follow the trail of the the merciless Apaches who had stolen his child, Marietta, from his extensive ranch at Santa Rita, near Tucson.

Mother and daughter are confident that Don Refugio has long since returned from his fruitless search, and is now suffering a double anguish and grief in regard to the loss of both wife and daughter.

"I doesn't feel 'zactly nat'r'al," said Giant George, knocking the ashes from his corn-cob pipe against the sole of his boot, and addressing Jack, who was smoking placidly; "somehow er 'nother, I'm pestered with a suspish' that things ain't goin' squar' et ther burg. Thar's bin sich a heft o' hellishness shoved enter Sardine-box since she war located, that hit doesn't seem es though she c'u'd glide easy-like hereafter."

"Ef ther 'Angel' warn't goin' ter take ther hearse fer Gold Gulch, I sh'u'd be more worritted; though hit ain't a dead sure thing that she'd git thar, right side up wi' care. There's so many hellyuns in Arizone, red, white, an' yaller, that yer doesn't know when or whar some on 'em won't jump yer."

"Sides that, I'm worritted es 'gards Hank,

fer he war chuck-full o' p'ison, an' he'll git a hull meenadgery in his butes, ef he kep' on pourin' down bug-juice arter we'-uns glided down range."

"I don't apprehend any danger between the burg and Gold Gulch, Pard George," returned Jack, confidently. "But I agree with you that life in Sardine-box is uncertain. Sudden and unexpected calamities have been the order of the day, almost every week since the burg was 'slapped up' judging from what you have told me, and my own experiences since I have been there."

"However, everything now points to a prosperous future, with peace and quiet, for the 'lead' laid open by the explosion is, without doubt, the grand bonanza of Arizona, and will cause a rush from up-country."

"As to Hank, poor fellow, whisky has got a tight grip on him, and I really don't believe he can weather another 'jim-jam circus.' I'm sorry for Marm Holbrook, and I'm sorry for Hank, too. He's a whole-souled little man, and they're a well-matched pair."

"But, George, look at Marietta; what a picture of grace and beauty she is, and how different her mother appears from what she was when we first saw her at Dead Man's Gulch—tattered, torn, scratched, and mad as was Hank, when suffering from mania! That cognomen, Juanita the Wild, given her by the people of Tucson, after grief at the abduction of her daughter had driven her insane, was but too fitting."

"It makes one's blood run cold to think what her fate might have been, had not Lena Reynolds also been captured, and we started out to her rescue. Verily, she can say, with Dante, that she has passed through Hades."

"I doesn't know Danty, an' never heerd o' Haydees," returned the giant scout; "I reckon hit ain't located in Arizone. But I kin take a afferdavy that Marietta bev bed a ormighty hefty 'mount o' condemned cussedness, wi' mighty little comfort mixed in o' late."

Jack lay back, and laughed heartily.

"George," he said, presently; "Hades means the sulphurous 'locate,' bossed by the black gentleman who is said to be ornamented with a tail, and who has hoofs like a buffalo-bull. I think it would be an appropriate 'cog' for Sardine-box City about now, if Marm Holbrook was not within its confines; for the 'Angel of the Range' has gone, and we have with us—"

Jack was here interrupted by the sound of a prolonged yell, which came from the western side of the range, and on the trail that they had so recently traveled.

The two scouts sprung to their feet, as though they had received a shock from a powerful electric battery.

For a moment all stood as if petrified, their gaze fixed down the gulch, and all their senses strained, when again the wild yell broke upon the air, echoing and re-echoing from crag to crag.

"Git, senora an' senorita! Git ahindt ther rocks. Jack, snatch yer long shuter an' p'int fer ther same locate, ter take keer o' ther weemin. I'll hold ther camp and ther critters. Hit's a white human that's shutin' off his extry wind, an' thar may be a bull batch o' crooked

cusses. What in thunderation hev brung'd them inter this hyer locate? I'll fill ther gulch wi' stiffs ef they buck ag'in' us."

George rattled these words off in a rapid manner: rage, determination and reckless daring in his face and voice. Meanwhile the ladies, in all haste, obeyed his orders. Not so Arizona Jack.

Grasping his "Winchester" the latter advanced to the side of the giant scout, jerking the lever of his rifle and throwing a cartridge from the magazine at the same time, as did his huge pard. The latter made no protest against Jack's having repudiated his directions. Thus they waited events.

The lower portion of the gulch was free from grass and covered with gravelly wash, and soon the sound of a horse galloping up the same was plainly heard. The listeners knew at once that but a single rider was approaching, and this caused them to feel somewhat relieved in regard to the ladies.

Then, as if the lone horseman knew that he was nearing those who might shoot him at any instant, he yelled out ere he came in sight:

"Whoop-er-e-e! Ker-whoop! I'm a-comin' on a cyclone rush! I'm ther Terrantaler o' Taos what never lost a leg. O-o-o-oh, yes! Giant George, I'm on yer trail chuck-full o' stud-hoss biz an' infermashe! Drap yer shooter an' don't git hyderphobic!"

The giant, dumfounded at the audacity of one whom he well knew to be crooked, and who had cause to fear him, stood glaring at the cedars which screened the new-comer from view but a moment. Then, in wild bounds, snorting with pain and fury, as the cruel spurs tore his flanks, the horse broke from the thicket and was brought to a halt, just opposite the two scouts.

"Whoop-er-e-e! Ker-whoop! Hyer I bees, boyees, steady by jarks. Right side up, like a blue streak, no matter how I strike dirt. Gaze et my allerbaster brow an' 'Pollo-like 'natermy two skips an' ruminate whether yer recog's me!

"I'm ther Terrantaler o' Taos, an', Giant George, yer hes allers tuck me fer a bad cit, 'coz I'm a migratin' meanderer floatin' 'round permis'us-like an' sp'iles a power o' p'ison. Howsomever, I'm hyer ter g'in yer opine o' me a flip-flop, fer I've rid, hot an' heavy, ter save yer ha'r an' ther cast-steel weemin."

"George, ther dang'd 'Paches air comin' down range on ther whoop-er-e-e, an' thar's bleed an' tortur' in ther evenin' atmosphear. Ther squaws o' El Orso's war-party an' a sprinklin' o' bucks air comin' in jist a hummin', but we'-uns kin salerwate 'em wi' ther help o' bug-juice ter keep up vim."

Having thus delivered himself, to the utter astonishment of his hearers, the Tarantula threw one of his long legs over his horse's head, and slid from his saddle.

Arizona Jack stared first at the vagabond borderer and then at Giant George in a questioning manner, as if he doubted the statements of the stranger.

"Whar'd yer diskiver ther 'Paches, an' how'd yer know anythin' 'bout El Orso's war-party?" azked George quickly.

The "Tarantula" then proceeded to slip the

bridle from his horse, to allow the animal to feed, seeming utterly indifferent to his present surroundings and coming events; hesitating to answer George's questions, in order that he might have time to concoct a tale that would be plausible, and yet not reveal his complicity in the "crookedness" that had prevailed in Sardine-box City.

Arizona Jack took advantage of this hesitation and put some additional questions to the bummer.

"And how did you know that we had ladies with us, and that we had come down the range?"

"I l'arned 'bout yer fight an' 'bout ther weemin, from a pilgrim that I see'd 'tween Sardine-box an' Gold Gulch, when I war meanderin' down range; an' I war takin' a see-ester on ther tip-top peaks, 'bove ther flip-flop o' a buzzard's wing, an' ther scratchin' o' a griz' b'ar, on ther bowlders below, woked me up et sun-up. I carved ther griz', an' hed my breakfus' offen his carkiss, and then gazed 'roun' my locate.

"Fu'st off, I foun' I war 'bove Sardine-box City, an' I see'd yer start down-range. Then I see'd ther skulkin' 'Paches war watchin' yer, an' war eager fer ha'r an' bleed. I know'd they'd skupe yer an' I concluded ter scoot in, an' gi'n yer ther hull biz; but I war dry, so I struck down-range, an' p'inted fer ther 'Nugget' arter whisk'. Thar I see'd ther hearse glide off wi' ther 'oman yer call ther 'Angel,' an' Marm Holbrook. When I 'roved in ther burg, thar warn't no 'citz' ter be see'd, an' Hank war drunk. I tolle him 'bout ther 'Paches, s'plied myself wi' this hyer John-demmy, an' then skuted.

"Reckon Hank's gut jim-jams by this.

"When I struck down-range, I see'd ther 'Paches on yer trail, but they laid low in ther gulch an' camped. I sent some big bowlders down inter ther gulch, an' sp'iled some on 'em. Then I dusted. But arter I gut ter ther pass, I see'd 'em comin' a-bilin', an' they'll be hyer afore soon. Now yer gut ther hull p'ogramme from ther Terrantaler, an' hit's squar', plain lingo. I'm hyer ter help ter wallop ther hellyuns—"

"Hold up!" interrupted Giant George. "Ther condemned scum air comin', an' we'-uns air in a tight box.

"Git ther weemins up ther rocks, Jack, lively! Terrantaler, show now that ye're squar' an' white. Lead ther nags up ter ther head o' ther gulch, ahint ther loose bowlders. Dang my skin ef this hain't bilious, on 'count o' ther kaliker. Ther dang'd squaws air wuss'n bucks, when they gits thar hyderphobic up!"

Jack now rushed to the affrighted ladies, and assisted them up the rough wall of the gorge.

The "Tarantula" worked lively, leading the horses as directed, behind the bowlders, while Giant George sprung further down the gulch to listen.

A moment, he bent his ear to the west. That was sufficient.

The thundering tramp of a large number of galloping horses was now plainly heard. Then the scout knew that the "Tarantula" had spoken true.

The hideous Apache hags, and murder-mad braves were coming, eager for revenge; for blood, and scalps, and victims for the torture-stake!

CHAPTER XIII.

AGAINST DESPERATE ODDS.

THE giant Arizonian sprung upright, his eyes blazing with fury, his teeth clinched, and his hands clutched in a deathlike grip about his rifle. Then he spoke in soliloquy, in a deep, determined tone, that spoke the unbended resolution of the man:

"Ef ther painted torturers gits ther leetle gal ag'in, they gits her arter ther sculp o' Giant George hev bin tored from his head, his heart's bleed hev stained ther rocks, an' ther Good Spirit hev called him 'over ther range.' I didn't s'pose ther condemned squaws 'u'd be so p'ison eager; but ef they gits a peep at Juanita an' Marietta, they'll fight like panthers ter captur' em. I hates ter war wi' weemin; but I sw'ar they ain't weemin—they're hags o' hell!"

Whirling rapidly around, Giant George darted to the head of the gulch, and came near knocking the "Tarantula" over, as the latter turned the corner of a huge boulder.

"Hyer, George," spoke the border bummer, in a hoarse whisper, "we'll climb up, fer I reckon yer ain't goin' ter lay 'roun' hyer, an' 'low ther or'nary scum ter pile onto yer, an' skin yer head, an' then skute up arter ther weemin."

"Thet's whar ye're right, Terranche? We-'uns must glide up ther rocks. Ther savage skunks air on ther crawl. I see that yer hes ther critters all bunk, an' I thank yer. 'Sides that, I spit out right hyer that ef yer hes 'cided ter turn squar', an' run on straight, open trails, as ter-day's work seems ter p'int, Giant George'll stan' by yer, an' pull ye outen ther bog o' 'crookedness.'

"I allers sot yer down es a white-livered, no'-count human, without 'sand' enough ter buck ag'in' a cotton-tailed rabbit; an' I opines I hes been mistuck, by yer actions so fur ter-night. Shake, an' then we'll climb, fer ther ball air 'bout ter open, I reckon, wi' lively music. Ther weemin must be kep' from bein' tuck, ef we-'uns goes under tryin'."

"Skute, George! I'm chuck-full o' bug-juice, an' hyderphobic griz'-bar indig'. Wait, an' watch me carve 'Paches, an' then spit out yer gab 'bout ther Terrantaler."

"S-s-s-sh!" came from the lips of the giant scout, and both then stole with caution, up the rough rock-strewn and cedar-dotted wall of the gulch; soon reaching, to their surprise, a little natural fort of crescent shape, there being a curved line of rocks, breast high, around it, and over which a view of the gulch below could be obtained. The rear of it was a wall of perpendicular rock, at the base of which were two huge bowlders, affording a safe retreat for Juanita and Marietta. There they now crouched, their arms wound about each other, and as pale as death: being filled with the most torturing apprehension, and but little reassured by the words of Arizona Jack.

The "Tarantula" threw down his blanket near the wall, while the Arizona pards peered down into the gulch, with anxious, piercing glances.

The border bummer crossed the level crescent-shaped space, and then around the huge masses of rock, halting as he saw the Castilian ladies,

and tearing his battered sombrero from his head in polite salutation.

"'Scuse me fer shovin' my carkiss hyar, ladies," he said; "but I'm eager ter tell yer that I'm a roarin' rager, an' kin clean out my weight in wile cats.

"I hez see'd yer purty faces, an' yer wenus-like 'natermies, in ther cyclone-whiz waltzes et Tucson an' Santa Rita; an' I hez 'shook' wi' Don Refugio more'n onc't. I'm ther Terrantaler o' Taos, an' I 'tends ter sp'ile ther knock-kneed, paint-daubed, greasy kiote spawn, an' go through 'em es quick es lubricated lightnin' through a gooseberry bush.

"We'll clean 'em out so speedy that they won't hev time ter gi'n than death-squeals. I'm a boss border hero, I am! Listen ter ther ding-dong o' my iron heart, an' gaze at my 'Pollo-like 'natermy. I'm mussed up some from slingin' myself ter warn yer that death an' tortur' war in ther evenin' atmospear; but hit's 'pay dirt' fer you-'uns that I'm smeared with—I'm gamblin' on that!

"Lay low, an' carm yerselves; fer yer ain't goin' ter be tuck, while ther Terranche kin crook a finger, er grip a slasher. I'm goin' ter fight, ontill ther ding-dong o' my iron heart simmers down ter ther flip-flop o' a dyin' June-bug's wing."

How long the "Tarantula" would have talked, it is impossible to say; but he was now recalled to the emergencies of the moment by a hiss from Giant George, and bowing to the ladies, who had been bewildered by his appearance and language, he whirled awkwardly about, strode to the natural breast-works, and squatted on the rocks. He then gripped pistol and knife, saying in a whisper, as he gazed into the faces of the two scouts:

"Now, boyees, I'm ready fer ther 'Pache cir-kuss; an' I'm primed fer pluggin' red meat. When yer hear my 'Whoop-er-ee, Ker-whoop,' yer'll hear somethin' drap close arterwards; an' drap heavy! I'm running my sheer o' this hyer fight, on a bug-juice foundashe."

"I reckon hit's 'bout time ter see ther flicker o' ther sneakin' kiotes through ther bush. Tha'r' playin' ther snake-crawl biz this time, dead sure!"

Giant George and Arizona Jack gave but little attention to the "Tarantula." Their eyes were sweeping the gulch below, from the base of the rock where their steeds were secured, screened from the view of any who might come that way, to the line of bowlders and cedars at the very foot of the adamantine wall.

Not long had the watchers to wait, for a hiss from the giant scout signaled the approach of the foe, but a moment after the "Tarantula" had ceased speaking; and all saw the heads of six hideous war-painted braves thrust from the low cedar branches, they being upon their hands and knees, and their black snake-like eyes glaring with exultation. They were evidently confident that the whites had rolled themselves in their blankets for the night, and were at their mercy.

Onward the red fiends came, still crawling, their long scalping-knives between their white and glittering teeth, their repulsive lips curled away from the same, like those of enraged wild

beasts. Their rifles they dragged along the ground, and were closely followed by the hideous hags with bows and arrows, ready at an instant's warning to be sent on their errand of death.

The snort of one of the horses behind the bowlders acted electric-like upon every squaw and brave. Arrows were fitted to bow-strings with a simultaneous movement, quick as flashes of light, while the braves presented their cocked rifles toward the cedars and bowlders that concealed the animals.

A moment after they all sprung to their feet, and in a crouching attitude stole across the open space to the cedars and bowlders, within which were the horses of the whites.

No sooner were the horses discovered than the Apaches glided stealthily here and there among the cedars; but finding no trace of the whites, they then bent their glances upward, evidently not a little disappointed, and reasoning that their intended victims had heard the tramp of their mustangs, and sought a favorable position for defense.

They argued, from the fact that the horses were equipped for the trail, that beyond all doubt the whites were crouching among the rocks up the cliff at the head of the gulch above them, and watching for an opportunity to steal down, bound upon their animals, and thus make their escape.

The quick waving of the bronzed hands no sooner ceased than all sprung along the base of the cliff at the head of the gulch, and up here and there amid the rough rocks, where foothold could be obtained; but not far had they proceeded when three spurts of fire flashed above them all at the same instant, and then a thunderous report rung down the gulch, echoing amid crags and chasms and clefts, followed by the terrible war-whoop and vengeful shrieks of the hags, and the howls of death.

Through all of these rung the sharp, spiteful crack of revolvers, the twang of bow-strings and the terrific reports of the overloaded rifles of the surviving braves—three having been shot dead at the first fire of the scouts and the "Tarantula."

And clinging to each other, fear and terror in their eyes, their fair faces as ghastly as death, their forms trembling as though stricken with an ague, their ears tortured by the vocal pandemonium and the sound of fire-arms and twang of bow-strings, crouched the Senora Juanita Refugio and her daughter Marietta amid the rocks and the dark shadows, while feathered shafts fell with shattered points from the cliffs above and around them.

CHAPTER XIV.

TRIUMPH OF THE RIGHT.

THE fiery flashes and murderous reports above their heads, together with the fall of some of their number, proved by the death-howls, at first filled the Apache horde with consternation. The report of two rifles and a revolver sounded on the night air, in the rock-walled Gulch, like the volley of a company of infantry. This, and the repeated echoes, for the moment caused the

Indians to think that a large number of whites were intrenched above.

In a very short space of time the three surviving braves sprung, with wild war-whoops, from different points over the rock breastworks, followed by the screeching squaws, all frantic with murderous fury.

George, Jack and the Tarantula bounded backward after firing the remaining shots in their revolvers at the hideous hags, every report being the death-knell of one of their number.

Then thrusting pistols in their belts, the three whites jerked their bowies to meet on equal terms the three braves who came bounding upon them.

With every muscle strained for the life-and-death conflict, the whites, nerved by the thought of the two helpless women behind the boulder, who might at any moment be discovered and cut to pieces by the infuriated hags—the reds, too, filled with a fiendish thirst for revenge—each trio, with eyes shooting glances of hate and fury, sprung upon the other, their knives clashing and throwing out sparks of fire, while the horrible sight chained the squaws to the positions which they occupied when first they caught sight of the interior of the natural fort.

A moment only elapsed after the clash of steel when blood spurted from the knife-arms of each brave, causing howls from the squaws. These sounds warned the whites that they had no time to lose; that the squaws would swarm upon them in a moment, or fill their bodies with arrows—this having been thus far prevented by keeping the warriors between themselves and the furious hags.

Realizing the value of time, and that life or death to all depended upon prompt action, Giant George yelled:

"Carve ther cusses, boyees! Then jump fer ther weemin, behindt ther boulder, an' load yer shooters!"

"Ker-whoop, Ker-whoop!" shouted the Tarantula, as, by one powerful downward stroke, he clove his red opponent from breast to thigh.

With a fearful death-yell, the brave sunk to the earth.

His last war-whoop had been sounded.

At the same instant, the bowie of the giant scout was plunged to the hilt in the breast of his antagonist; and Arizona Jack, yelling, "Whoop her through, or bu'st," by a powerful slash to the right, nearly severed the head from the body of the brave he had forced to the very wall of the rocky stronghold.

The death of the three braves was almost simultaneous, and was followed by a fiendish chorus of howls, vengeful whoops and rallying shrieks from the hideous hags who at once poured over the rocky barrier; but the whites sprung quickly behind the boulder, the Giant calling out:

"Jack, load ther 'sixes,' an' me an' Terranch'll stan' off ther condemned squaws each side ther boulder!"

Immediately the giant scout and the "Tarantula" took up their position, knives in hand, one at each entrance, the huge rock being very high, and having perpendicular sides, which prevented the squaws from attacking, or from casting themselves down from the top.

Jack, with quick movements, began to reload,

jerking the revolvers from the belts of his pards for the purpose; at the same time endeavoring to cheer the two despairing women by shouting hopeful words. This was a necessity, as the squaws kept up a continuous chorus of mad whoops and shrieks; being kept from immediate approach to the whites, by George and the "Tarantula" hurling immense stones upon them.

Jack loaded the revolvers expeditiously, handing them to their owners; and then a plan of escape was quickly formed, the giant scout giving the necessary directions to favor success. Prompt action was also a point of advantage, the squaws being mostly at the side of the huge rock, where the scouts were posted.

The plan was for Jack and himself to hasten down the gulch side with the two women, guarding and assisting the latter; while the "Tarantula" should keep in their rear, and prevent the furious hags from too close approach.

To favor this attempt, the "Tarantula" blazed away at the hags, who stood yelling in the proposed line of escape, wounding two of them.

"Ker-whoop, Ker-whoop!" rung the war-cry of the tall, ungainly borderer, as he bounded from his post out into the natural fort; his arms flying about like Don Quixote's wind-mills, his glittering bowie carving the air. So strange were his yells and appearance—the manner of his having split the brave open being fresh in the minds of the squaws—that those on the south side of the walled space sprung to the north; even rushing around the boulder corner, and thus exposing themselves to the fire of Giant George.

He gave another "Ker-whoop, Ker-whoop!" and rushed back to his position, meeting George and Jack at the side of the boulder, with the pallid-faced, trembling senora and her daughter; the giant scout having perceived at once that the "Tarantula" had caused a very favorable change in the positions of the squaws, and that the moment for an attempted escape with the women had arrived.

"Kerwhoop out ag'in, Terranche!" said George, "an' we'uns'll glide down the rocks. Keep ther hags from bein' too p'ison an' eager, an' we'll jump stock an' git up an' git."

Before the squaws sprung out from the north side of the boulder, the war-cry of the bummer sounded, and jerking a revolver he let fly four shots, the bullets striking the side of the cliff near the Apache bags, while Jack, with Marietta, followed by the giant and the senora, hastened down the gulch wall as expeditiously as was possible, the scouts having no little trouble in assisting the terror-stricken women.

The movement was so quickly executed that the heads of the retreating party disappeared below the rock walls before the squaws, now rendered furiously frantic at having been for a moment or two inactive through their fear of one man, rushed from behind the rock with arrows fitted to bow-strings, while the Tarantula was engaged in a bear-dance, yelling like a fiend, revolver in hand.

Instantly half a score of bows twanged, but the burly borderer sunk quickly to the mountain shelf, and the deadly shafts flew over him with a whirring sound like the flight of birds,

the steel points glinting in the moonlight, as the missiles whirled on their fruitless mission, grazing along the sides of the cliff.

The Tarantula instantly sprung to his feet, bounded upon the barrier of loose stones, with a far-sounding "Ker-whoop, Ker-whoop!" and then down the gulch side he went at dangerous speed, leaving the squaws dumfounded at his apparent desertion of the other whites.

Immediately they rushed, with frantic yells, to the rear of the boulder, evidently suspicious that they had been cheated out of their revenge, which was more to them than life itself. Then, with outcries of disappointed rage and fury, they sprung in a body to the barrier and gazed below. There they saw a sight that drove them to frenzy, being naught else than the hated captive who had been the prime cause, as they believed, of the death and destruction of their war-party and the camp of their chief, El Orso—Marietta, the Rose of Santa Rita, the infatuated of El Orso, and "Bad Medicine," her mother.

For a moment the foiled hags clutched at the rocks, their snaky eyes fixed, their teeth set and grinding together, incapable, from their rage and disappointment, of motion. Then they gave a piercing, vengeful yell of blood-thirsty frenzy, and bounded over the barrier; but the taunting and triumphant shout of the Tarantula sounded far down the gulch ere they reached the camp.

On went the scouts with their fair charges, the latter scarce believing escape to be possible, all at headlong speed, over the moonlit level plain, southwest, toward Tucson; and after reaching a point fully a mile from the range, they jerked their horses to a halt, glancing back in apprehension and anxiety at the non-appearance of the Tarantula.

And, as they were about to return, resolved not to desert one who had, without doubt, saved them from death, the anxious looks upon their faces disappeared, giving place to extreme relief and mirth, for out from the gulch galloped more than two-score of equipped mustangs, the "Tarantula" in the rear, guiding his horse to right and left at terrific speed to keep them together.

Then out from the cedars rushed the threemaddened Apache hags, with frantic yells, for not only had they been vanquished, but here their mustangs were driven from them forever, thus leaving them on foot, hundreds of miles from their mountain retreat, in the enemy's country.

The "Tarantula" was of course full of exultation, as he in his mind counted the "ducks" that the mustangs would be sold for in Tucson, and the probable amount he could squeeze out of Don Refugio for his energetic exertions, the "griz'b'ar fight an' vim he had shoved out," in the rescue of the wife and daughter of the latter.

CHAPTER XV.

THE END CROWNS THE WORK.

Two days after the escape of the scouts and the two Castilian ladies from the gulch, they arrived safely in Tucson; corraling the mustangs on the outskirts of the town, George and Jack

refusing to acknowledge any claim on the animals, and insisting that they belonged by right to the "Tarantula."

We will not tax the patience of the reader by entering into the details of the reception of the brave Americans by Don Refugio; or the almost insane joy and relief of the latter at the recovery of his wife and beautiful daughter, whom he had mourned as dead.

A grand *fiesta* was given by the happy husband and father in honor of the recovery of his loved ones; and no less happy than the old Don was a young Castilian *caballero*, the affianced of Marietta, who added his gold to the heavy purses which his father-in-law elect endeavoured to force upon those who, at the risk of their own lives, had saved his darlings.

The proffered rewards were declined by both George and Jack; nothing being accepted by them but two fine horses and some richly embroidered silken scarfs from Marietta and her mother.

Rich presents were also sent to Lena and Marm Holbrook, and gold watches to both Hank and Tom Jones. The two scouts were finally persuaded to accept the gold proffered by Don Refugio, with the understanding that it was to be distributed among the "citz" who had participated in the fight with El Orso's war-party, which had resulted in the rescue of Marietta from a terrible fate.

As the reader has doubtless surmised, the "Tarantula" made no objections to receiving the purse tendered him as his share, as well as a new suit of clothing, with sombrero and boots of fine workmanship, and a complete outfit of silver-mounted arms, with corresponding belt and clasp from Marietta's lover.

Belts were also presented to George and Jack, to be kept in remembrance of the donors.

The parting between the rescuers and Don Refugio was so demonstrative on the part of the latter, that our friends were forced to break away abruptly, George asserting that "ther ole coon war 'bout es lunyfied et gittin' ther weemin back es he c'u'd ha' bin et losin' 'em."

And out from Tucson's Plaza our friends galloped, Jack and George having prevailed upon the "Tarantula" to accompany them to Sardine-box City, and to locate there, for a time at least.

And speeding on the back trail toward the Pinaleno Range, on their way to Sardine-box City, we will leave them, in order that we may "round-up" other characters ere we close our narrative.

—
A week has passed since the stage rattled up the rise from Sardine-box City, on its way to Gold Gulch, with Marm Holbrook and Lena Reynolds as "insides." And we now wish to call the reader's attention to the same coach and its occupants, at the distance of two miles from the burg, on their return to the same.

Marm Holbrook sits in the driver's seat, clinging with both hands to the sides; one foot braced firmly against the foot-board, and the other slightly elevated, ready to kick the brake when a decline or "short-down" is reached. Considerable anxiety, not to say anger, is manifested

on the round, motherly face of the kind-hearted landlady of the Nugget Hotel; her eyes darting glances from the road-bed to the six fast trotting horses that "snake" the old "hearse" along at a lively rate of speed, and thence to the driver at her left. This last is none other than Lena Reynolds, or as Hank and the "citz" have designated her, the "Angel o' Penarlayno Range."

Lena handles the ribbons in a confident manner, and seems, delicate as are her frame and hands, able to control the team without inconvenience; although, as has been shown, Marm Holbrook has been obliged to manage the brake.

The explanation of this situation of affairs is plain; for the driver, Jim Doderson, lies outstretched upon the top of the coach, behind them, his mouth wide open, and breathing but faintly. The shameful fact is that Jim is in the condition known as "dead drunk."

The right wheel strikes a stone, causing it to jump and jolt the coach, and Marm Holbrook to tighten her grip, while her face showed increased anger and anxiety, as she cried out, in a very impatient tone of voice:

"Wa-al. I sw'ar! Ya-as, I sw'ar, meetin'-house 'oman that I air—dog-gone hit! 'Scuse me, Lena; but I'm plum pesterified an' worried, an' my bestest dress air all runkled up, an' my bunnet mashed, an' I do b'lieve my ha'r's down! I've heerd four o' ther new ha'r-pins strike ther wheel an' bound plum out over ther string-team; jist, I s'pose, ter aggrevate me. Leastways, hit 'pears so; though I hopes I've gut sense 'nough left ter know they ain't nothin' but wire.

"Jist yeou rumernate on hit a bit. I swan I doesn't see how yer kin b'ar some things. Yer 'pears better, an' looks more like yerself then I've see'd yer since yer 'roved from St. Louis; but mebbe so hits 'cause ye're skeered, an' ther bleed hes all stamped to yer cheeks. Hyer we-'uns air, a pa'r o' lone weemin, out in Ari-zone, an' can't git inter a hearse ter take a thirty mile skute, without ther boss o' ther ribbons, that o'nary, no'-count cuss, Jim Doderson, what's es slimpsy es a ole dish-rag—without he hev gut ter git chuck-full o' bug-juice!

"Never yeou mind! I hain't lost my grip, an' kin kick ther brake down ther decline"—this she said, as Lena offered to change seats; "yer foot's too leetle an' delerkit, an' I'm s'prised ter see yer work ther lines an' control ther critters, when yer doesn't 'pear ter hev any more stren'th nor a chicken with a three months' run of old-fashioned pip!"

Lena's face was wreathed with smiles, but she was forced to pay strict attention to the team; and after musing a while, Marm Holbrook continued:

"Lena, I dassen't think, er I'd go plum lunyfied! Ther hull dang'd world air goin' ter destrucsh' on a cyclone stompede. Whisk' keeps pickin' up ther poperlation an' slingin' 'em on ther whirl, chuckfull o' hellishness, an' plum' over ther range 'fore they knows what's up, er kin say, 'Now I lay me—amen!'

"But, bless my soul! Thar's Sardine-box City, an' ther Nugget air stan'in' till yit, fer a wonder, though thar seems ter be a break down below that don't 'pear nat'ral-like. I'mbettin' my back-ha'r ag'in' a 'Pache papoose's scalp

thet Hank's dead gone wi' jim-jams, er else atween four slabs an' planted!

"Oh, dearie me! I'd be e'ena'most tickled ter death ef I sh'u'd find Hank right side up wi' care, standin' nat'r'al-like, ez he used ter 'fore we struck from Texas, Arizone-way. Waal, I do declar'! I b'lieve ther critters air goin' ter take ther bits atween tha'r teeth an' stompede inter ther canyon!"

"Keep yer grip, Lena! I'm down hefty on ther break, an' I kin see ther 'citz' air on hand ter stop ther team. Reckon we'll make ther riffie. Bless my soul! thar's Hank standin' in ther Nugget door, an' I kin tell from hyer thet he's es sober es a deakun. Lena, thar's Big George and Arizone Jack, an' another pilgrim gallopin' up inter ther burg from toward down range."

"I'm dead sure they hes jist 'roved from Tucson. Hit's a dang'd good thing, we'-uns all comin' inter ther burg ter onc't. Hold tight! Ther dang'd 'citz' air goin' ter yell. Thet durned Tom Jones air makin' fun o' me, I'mbettin'."

"Ther hull danged burg air lunyfied ag'in, an' we'll hev ter slap up a crazy-house aforo we does a meetin'-house. Oh, Lordy! Lena, I came nigh flip-floppin' off ther hearse, I'm so chuckfull o' glad ter git hum ag'in!"

As the words of Marm Holbrook imply, the coach was rattling down the decline, at the foot of which was Sardine-box City, and as the driver always made a point here of allowing the horses to let themselves out, the animals sprung down the road at a gallop, Lena being unable to control their speed.

As the "citz" saw and recognized the landlady and the Angel, the latter holding the ribbons and the former standing upon the brake, she having turned her back to the team and gripped the iron bars at the side of the seat with desperation in her endeavor to lessen the terrific speed of the horses. As the "citz" saw the mother of the burg thus situated, they threw their sombreros in air, and roared with uncontrollable laughter, filling the air with their joyous yells.

George, Jack and the Tarantula galloping into town from the south, also seeing the strange sight, the two former, with anxious looks, loosened there lassoes, quickly coiled and adjusted the nooses, and then driving spurs guided their animals, one to the right and the other to the left, for the purpose of stopping the coach-horses, rendered more unmanageable now by the yelling "citz," who seemed not to apprehend any danger to the women.

The Tarantula also spurred forward, and before the stage reached the Nugget the lassoes of the two scouts hissed through the air, the nooses darting forward and over the heads of the wheelers, then tightening at the same moment. Some of the "citz," brought to reason by this act of the scouts, now sprung to the heads of the string and lead horses, bringing the coach to such a sudden halt that Marm Holbrook was thrown violently from her position on the break, but the Tarantula, who had at once anticipated her fall, spurred his horse forward and caught the shrieking landlady of the Nugget in his long arms.

The giant spurred up to the fore-wheels, his

honest, manly face radiant with pleasure, and Lena Reynolds dropped the lines and sprung from her perch into the arms of the gigantic scout.

Hank Holbrook, perfectly sober, "for onc't," as his wife expressed it, no sooner saw Lena safe in the arms of George, than he yelled:

"'Rah for the Angel o' Penarlayno Range! 'Rah fer my ole 'oman! 'Rah! 'Rah 'Rah!"

"Ker-whoop! Ker-whoop!"

Thus rung the war-cry of the "Tarantula" the "citz" meanwhile staring at him in wonder; for, had they known him previously, his present "make-up" and appearance was so changed that they must have failed to recognize him. He had, for the first time "in a coon's age, shook hands wi' soap," as he expressed it, he had been shaved besides, and this, with his new outfit, made him present rather a fine appearance. His great muscular strength had been shown by his catching the fleshy and solid landlady, and this caused him to be looked upon with respect.

After he had been formally introduced by the giant and his exploits upon the recent trip had been duly detailed, all were delighted to make his acquaintance. Hank, who failed to recognize him, "cottoned" to the "Tarantula" at once. In fact, his peculiar ways, words and manner produced jollity and banished "blues" wherever he went in the burg.

Lena, too, became his firm friend, a fact that strengthened his resolution to "follow straight open trails, and become a squar' cit" instead of a "bad" one.

As a matter of course, there was a great jollification when Giant George distributed the gold and presents sent by Don Refugio, Marietta and Juanita. Hank and Tom Jones were nearly beside themselves and Marm Holbrook nearly went into hysterics over her beautiful black silk dress.

So demoralized had been the mind of poor Hank from his indulgence in his own merchandise that he really believed the horrible tableau that had been gotten up by Tom Jones was the first rum-born vision, the initial views of a case of "jim-jams" which would have ended in his death had not the "citz" taken him in hand.

And now, kind reader, leaving Sardine-box City with prosperity in prospective, the worthy sheriff of the burg having gotten the mills in position: the furnaces also being erected and slab sheds over the same—the "Blow-up" promising to be a bonanza—leaving the burg thus, all of our characters for once happy and contented, fully believing their trials and tribulations to be things of the past, we will also leave them for the present.

THE END.

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